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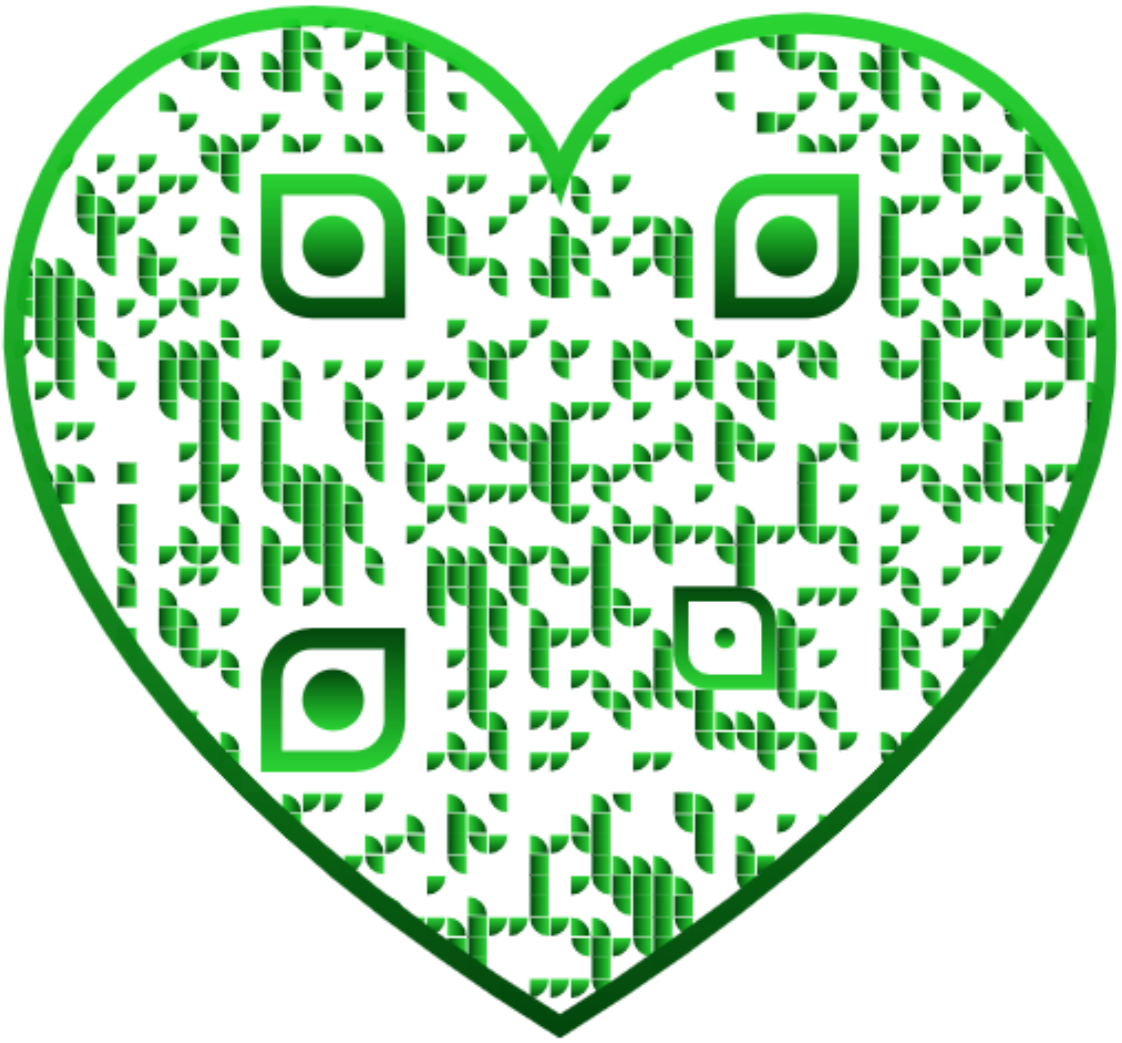

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BEGINNING WITH THE END

After three years, 17 issues and countless cars, this, sadly, is the final issue of *Aston Martin Driver*.

Having taken over from issue number three, it's been a genuine honour to have been at the helm for the majority of the magazine's history and from my first photoshoot way back in June 2022 of a 1976 V8 Vantage prototype (pictured above) to my final one at the end of 2024 with a Rapide S and DBX for the front cover twin test feature of this issue, I've driven some amazing cars in that time. You can read which have been my ten favourites (and the one that didn't make the list due to breaking down on me twice) from page 19.

I'd also like to thank everyone who has helped the magazine in that time; whether an individual owner or a specialist dealer, none of this could have happened without so many people willing to give up their time. As much as I've enjoyed driving some amazing cars, meeting so many enthusiasts of this fantastic brand is what's really made the last two and a half years special.

Despite writing about Aston Martins throughout my 25-year journalistic career, I've still learned a huge amount over the last 15 issues and have come to appreciate the marque even more. *Aston Martin Drive*r might be coming to an end, but my affection for the brand will continue.

Paul Walton
Editor

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UP FRONT NEWS

DB12 GOLDFINGER EDITION

Aston Martin has recently launched the DB12 Goldfinger Edition, which celebrates a 60-year partnership with the James Bond series of films. With the 1964 film *Goldfinger* being the first, where the Aston Martin DB5 appeared, the new ultra-luxury Super Tourer DB12 receives the 007 treatment courtesy of the marque's bespoke personalisation service, Q by Aston Martin.

Powered by a 4.0-litre V8 twin-turbo petrol engine, producing 680PS (671bhp) with 800Nm of torque, the DB12 Goldfinger Edition is strictly limited to a run of 60 cars, all finished with Silver Birch exterior paintwork, featuring 21in multi-spoke wheels, bespoke gold side strakes and a unique Aston Martin logo in silver with a black enamel finish.

Inside this special edition, the leather Sports Plus seats are finished in the classic DB5 fluted style with an intricate Prince of Wales check perforation pattern, which extends to the door inserts and the headliner, as well as being etched on to a unique treadplate. A polished sill plaque adorns the Goldfinger 60th anniversary logo.

A subtle nod for Bond aficionados is the 'eight of hearts' embroidered onto the driver's sunvisor, which references the playing card seen during the famous Miami pool scene in *Goldfinger*.

Each Aston Martin DB12 Goldfinger Edition is presented with an array of gifts, including a custom car cover, key presentation box, a Silver Birch Speedform model, a 2007 vintage Champagne Bollinger with four matching glasses and a section of the iconic Furka Pass scene in *Goldfinger* in 35mm film.

VALKYRIE'S LAP RECORD

Aston Martin's hypercar has smashed the lap record around Silverstone's GP circuit for a road car by an astonishing 10 seconds. In mid-November 2024, a road-legal Valkyrie was driven by Le Mans winner and chief test driver Darren Turner, completing a lap in 1:56.42 and beating the previous road car record of 2:06.83 that was set in 2022 by a modified Porsche 911 GT2 RS.

Darren Turner is a three-time class winner with Aston Martin at the Le Mans 24 Hours and is AM's official high-performance test driver. Prior to his racing career with Aston Martin, he was a Formula 1 test driver.

"The car performed brilliantly," he said afterwards, noting that it was running on road-legal Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. "It blows my mind that this is a road-legal car that you can use to drive to Silverstone and then go faster than the pole lap record in the British GT Championship."

This achievement makes the Valkyrie the first road car to complete a lap below the two-minute mark, and even beats the fastest GT3 record, which was set in 2019 by a Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo at 1:58.165.

On-board video of the Valkyrie at Silverstone shows it reached 170mph on the Hamilton Straight and 180mph on the Hangar Straight – a few snippets of in-car action can be seen on YouTube (search for Aston Martin Valkyrie breaks Silverstone track record) or via www.astonmartin.com.

NEW AM DEALERSHIPS

New Aston Martin dealerships have recently been introduced in the UK and some existing ones have opened new premises. Aston Martin Birmingham is now officially open at a new state-of-the-art location in Solihull, following a £10m investment from dealer partner Grange, part of the Cambria Automobiles group.

Aston Martin's footprint in the north of England is also boosted by the launch of a new 1,468m² dealership in Leeds, operated by Yorkshire-based automotive retailer JCT600.

Marshall Motor Group has joined the UK dealer network and will operate from Sevenoaks, representing the South East of England.

Operated by JCT600, a new 1,468m² dealership in Leeds is now open

SUSTAINABLE FUELS AT GOODWOOD

Image: Jayson Fong

The 2024 Goodwood Revival became the world's first historic motorsport event to run all of its races solely on sustainable fuel and in 2025, the 82nd Members' Meeting will follow suit, requiring all competitors to use a fuel with a minimum of 70% advanced sustainable components.

The 82nd Members' Meeting will take place on Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 April. Early bird tickets are available to members and fellows of the Goodwood Road Racing Club until Tuesday 31 December (joining the GRRC Fellowship costs £85 per year) via goodwood.com or by calling the ticket office on 01243 755055.

The Goodwood Members' Meeting is an access all areas, epic weekend of motor racing, hosted by and exclusively for the Goodwood Road Racing Club.

As well as a full programme of racing, the Members' Meeting features all kinds of cars from classic tin-tops and GTs, to motorcycles and open-wheeled Formula 3 and Formula 1 machines.

Founded by the Duke of Richmond, the annual event aims to re-create the atmosphere and camaraderie of the original BARC Members' Meetings held at Goodwood throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

WALL ART

If you can't afford or find a genuine DB4 GT Zagato, then perhaps the next best thing is a re-creation of the front end to hang on the wall of a garage, workshop or home. Aston Service Dorset is now offering this piece of wall art, which is manufactured to scale.

The exterior is handmade from aluminium using the original drawings to ensure it's the correct shape. There are even working LED headlights and sidelights, an air intake (intended to feed cold air to the carburettors), bonnet bulges and the correct type of grille. Hidden behind the exterior, there's part of the chassis, which is made of aluminium, along with an aluminium radiator and oil cooler.

For further details, contact Aston Service Dorset on 01202 574727 or visit their website at astonservicedorset.com.

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AMOC AT 90

The Aston Martin Owners Club will be celebrating its 90th anniversary on the 25 May 2025 with events taking place worldwide on or around that date.

Celebrations will kick-off in London with a nod to the founders meeting, which took place at the Grafton Hotel. Summer brings a tour of Northern England and Scotland before the club heads to France for all things Le Mans.

In the autumn, a European tour will coincide with the International Anniversary Weekend where members from all corners of Europe will gather at the foot of the stunning Steinernes Meer mountains to celebrate. The Aston Martin Owners Club has over 8,000 members worldwide. For further details on how to join, visit the club's website at www.amoc.org.

Images: Nicholas van der Walle

MULTI-FUNCTION REVERSING LIGHT

The Lucas L661 reversing light that's fitted to the Aston Martin DB6 and several other British classic cars can now be upgraded with an LED kit from Better Car Lighting.

Not only can the reversing light be changed to a brighter (white) LED, but inside the Lucas assembly, a fog light and third brakelight can also be incorporated. "The custom-designed LED lightboard fits neatly behind the lens and becomes virtually invisible when in place," says Gil Keane at BCL. "With the upgrade fitted, the reversing light becomes several times more powerful plus also and invisibly, it becomes a third brakelight and also a red rear fog light. The kit comes with everything needed, including wiring and full instructions. Tech support is available if needed." Priced at £107.99 (including VAT), contact BCL on 0121 773 7000 / bettercarlighting.co.uk.

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BIGGER BUNKER RANGE

The Bunker range of garage and workshop modular storage from Draper Tools has recently expanded with new racking and shelving, a modular corner combo, tool trolleys and workbenches.

"Whether you're looking to organise a treasured tool collection or simply banish garage clutter for good, the Bunker modular collection can be purchased individually, so you can create your own custom set-up," says Draper. "Alternatively, there are ready made combos to choose from featuring all the individual items you need to build an enviably cool, calm and organised storage system. Whatever you choose, every inch of the Bunker collection is built to protect, with a ten-year warranty on the entire range." For further details, visit bunkerstorage.com.

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CLASSIC CARS AND CGT

The recent Autumn 2024 budget saw an increase in Capital Gains Tax (CGT) from 10% to 18% for the lower rate and from 18% to 24% for the higher rate.

However, classic cars are exempt from CGT and also the recent increase, as Tom Wood, founder of Car & Classic (www.carandclassic.com), explains, "Unlike other assets, classic cars, while legally considered 'wasting', often appreciate over time due to factors like restoration, rarity, and historical appeal. For collectors, the CGT exemption adds even more value to these vehicles."

To qualify for the CGT exemption, cars must remain in their original 'personal use' configuration. Any modifications, such as for racing, could change their tax status.

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RUPERT KEYZAR
ASTON MARTIN MEANS V8

EVERY MARQUE has a car that defines it. To even an avid non-car person, such a car leaves no doubt over what it is. For example, the F40 (nothing other than a Ferrari), the Countach (Lamborghini's bedroom wall pin-up) and every Rolls-Royce ever made. For Aston Martin, it is without question the classic DB5.

But I would add another to Aston Martin. For if the company name were ever found in the Oxford English Dictionary, then it would simply say 'the V8'.

Aston Martin is now synonymous with 'supercar' status, a la Ferrari and Lamborghini, but this only came about because of the V8 models. For up until the DBS V8 of 1970, the company only made beautiful, high-end sports cars. But with the V8 came power, presence, style and more than a hint of 'je ne sais quoi'.

Looking a bit like a Mustang for sure, William Towns perfected the fastback look with a style that was uniquely and unmistakably British. From whatever angle you look at one, something special makes it stand out and its immediate surroundings tend to shrink a little. The standard V8 has a restrained but dignified sense of power about it and is not overtly in your face like other supercars. The V8 Vantage, on the other hand, has the type of presence and aura that simply says, 'don't even think about it'.

Of course, open the bonnet and you see what it's all about – the power. That sense of power is certainly amplified by the carburettors and airbox – fuel injection, from a cosmetic perspective, just doesn't scream power as much as a V8 topped with quad Weber 42 DCNFs or 48 IDAs. And if you are lucky enough to own a Vantage with the 'big bore' pack with 50mm chokes, you'll know exactly what I mean. Flames out of the exhausts on the over-run and all that. And it's a personal choice of course, but a V8 is meant to have a manual gearbox and a power bulge.

Aston Martin is now synonymous with 'supercar' status, a la Ferrari and Lamborghini,

The interior is something else though and it's the size and luxuriousness of it that hits home. Flat and square dashes rarely set the pulse going, but the V8's imposing dash is amply complemented by just about the right number of dials. The seats are sublime and the cosseted, but safe, feel is quite unmatched. And the smell of that 1970s and 1980s Connolly leather really is to die for.

Over the years, various upgrades modernised the car such as bodywork changes, new wheels and upgraded interiors. In its final guise, the V8 Vantage X-Pack was the ultimate V8. But yet, the connection back to the first DBS V8 was clear to see.

They're such a rarity on the roads these days. Even in the 1990s when I first started driving them, reactions from other drivers and pedestrians told you that you were in something uber special. Today, it's even more so.

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2000 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage V12 #17580

Introducing this 2000 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage V12 featured with 45,654 miles on the odometer. Finished in Black complemented with a Grey and Black interior. Equipped with an automatic transmission, V12 engine, 4-wheel disc brakes, brake calipers with “Aston Martin” script, dual exhaust outlet, “DB7 Vantage” badging, Bridgestone Potenza tires, and 18-inch multi-spoke alloy wheels. Convenience features include air conditioning, power-adjustable exterior mirrors, Alpine radio, 4-spoke steering wheel, center console, and sun visors with a vanity mirror on the passenger side. This particular example of the DB7 Vantage comes with an owner’s manual, receipt copies, and a clean CARFAX report, providing peace of mind to prospective buyers. British sports cars are constantly rising in value and this is an excellent opportunity to acquire this well-equipped Aston Martin DB7 V12 that is mechanically sound. For $24,750

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GARRY TAYLOR
HISTORY IS BUNK

FOR THE future is where it is at and all car manufacturers look forward to selling cars to keep themselves alive, and not wallow in some time capsule. So, is heritage or history important? Some start-ups in the EV era seem to be progressing without any – Tesla anyone?

I may be wrong, but when the Aston Martin Heritage Trust marketing tag line says, "When shared, heritage fuels passion," I wonder does it really? As a trustee, I must take equal responsibility for allowing such PR puff to be used on its website and elsewhere, but for some reason a little part of me withers whenever I see that. I suppose I should raise this at the next champagne* fuelled trustee meeting, but I do struggle to think of an alternative, so I park it. Ironic really because in August at the British Motor Museum, Gaydon, the AMHT held its fourth Heritage Festival as an arena and platform for storytelling, connection and celebration of Aston Martin heritage. Hundreds of Aston Martin cars from all across the country arrived from pre-war to current era models, leading to a staggering display of a record-breaking 702 cars, clearly demonstrating the very deep marque history. Clearly the 2,000-plus visitors had some emotional charge to arrive and perhaps it was a passion for its heritage.

Having a passion for Aston Martin's history wasn't something Dr Ulrich Bez had in abundance when he arrived as chairman and CEO at Aston Martin Lagonda from mid-2000. He explained why on the festival stage (and currently on the AMHT Podcast, episode 28). "I am always a little bit forward thinking and not so much in the history. You really can't define exactly why you have so many people who are so keen to own an Aston Martin and be seen with an Aston Martin. But I was not so much looking back, I was more interested in the future because I said, a history without a future is just history. And I came to Aston Martin when there was a history, but there was no future. So, giving Aston Martin a future makes the history a heritage."

Some start-ups in the EV era seem to be progressing without any – Tesla anyone?

History may be bunk, but as long as there is a future, there is a heritage which is continually evolving. Just witness the enthusiasm of having the Vanquish name returning once more.

A festival visitor wrote soon afterwards, "Walking around this stunning collection of highly desirable motor cars only reinforced my belief that with a combination of high-performance engines, the brand's rich history, heritage and craftsmanship, Aston Martin is still one of the world's most luxurious and desirable automobiles." Others told the AMHT very similar musings.

With a timeline going back 111 years, clearly Aston Martin can display a heritage that still stirs the soul, and yes, create a passion for the marque. I will leave the AMHT tag line as it is.

**AMHT lawyers asked me to point out that no champagne is consumed.*

As well as being a lifelong advocate of the brand, Garry is currently a trustee of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust (www.amht.org.uk)

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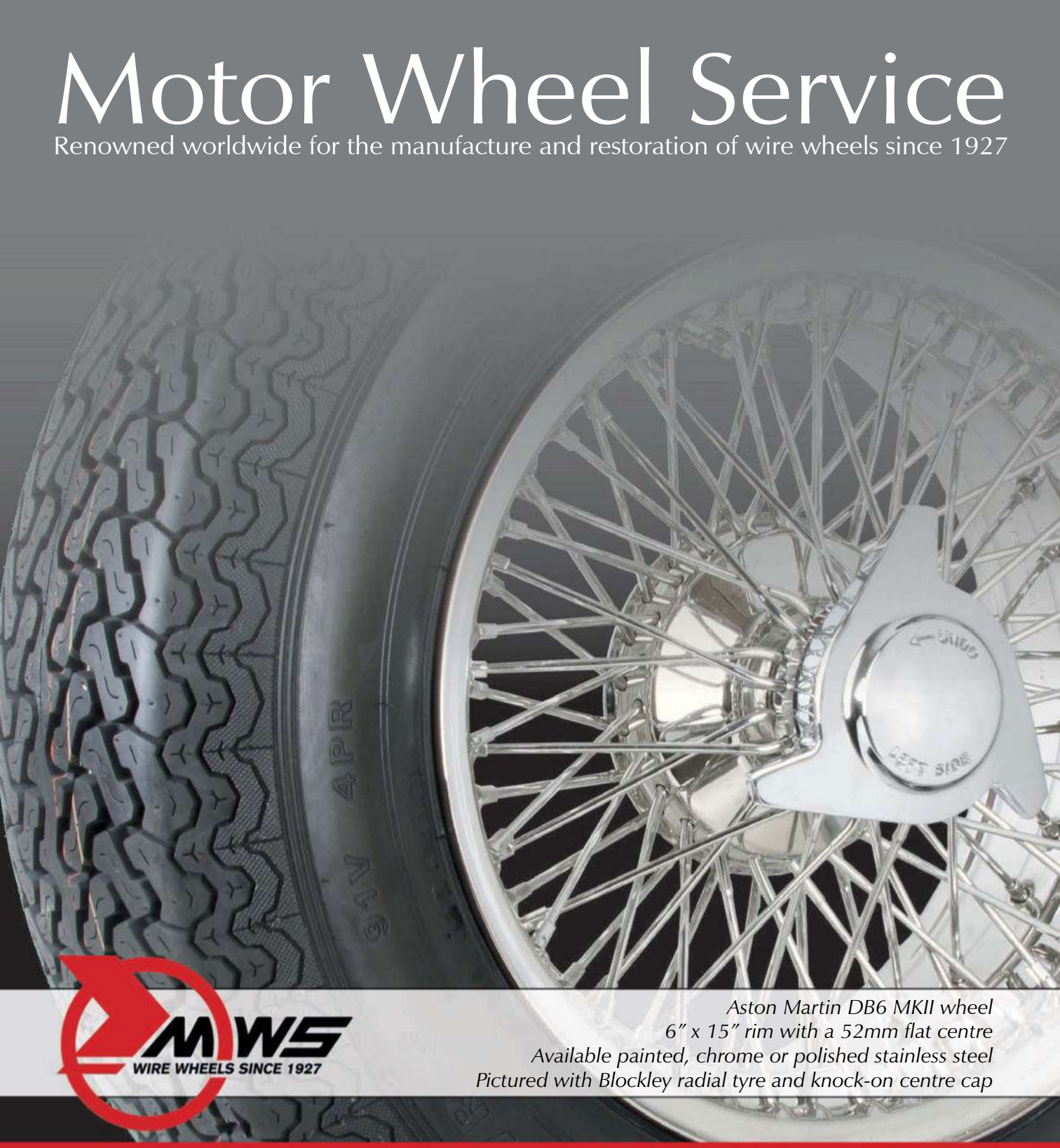

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GUY WYLES
AUTOMATED MANUALS

IN 2001 the V12 Vanquish was the most advanced car in the world and prompted Dr Bez's slogan 'power, beauty & soul'. Rather satisfyingly, legend suggests that it was the first Aston of the modern era to rattle Maranello. So much so the 550 Maranello quickly became the 575 Maranello within a year of the Vanquish launch, offering – for the first time on a Ferrari V12 GT - an automated manual gearbox to directly compete with the Aston. Both cars used Magneti Marelli electro-hydraulic actuators to automate the shifting processes on what were otherwise standard manual gearboxes – Tremec for the Vanquish and Graziano for the Ferrari.

While advanced for its time, both manufacturers were just applying electric buttons and hydraulic 'arms and legs' to existing manual transmissions, rather than designing purpose-built automated gearboxes, such as the Audi DSG gearbox.

All of Aston's automated manual transmissions (up to Sportshift 3) use a single clutch and each iteration enjoyed improved hardware and software to its predecessor.

The V12 Vanquish used a six-speed transmission operated by hydraulic actuators and ran from 2001 to 2007. It was upgraded with magnetic sensors for the S in 2005.

The Sportshift 1 ran from 2007 to 2012 in the V8 Vantage and the One -77 (2011-2012). The Vanquish's Tremec box was changed for a Graziano unit, designed for the Magneti Marelli electro-hydraulic actuators, similar to the Ferrari 360 and 430 transmissions. Creep mode was introduced, causing the car to creep forward when in gear with no throttle applied, much like a true auto, but unfortunately reducing clutch life.

Sportshift 2 was released in 2011 for the Vantage S. It was a big improvement as a seven-speed with an upgraded electro-hydraulic system and improved software to enable faster and smoother gearchanges. The clutch-slipping creep mode was swapped for hill start assist.

Sportshift 3 was designed for the V12 Vantage S in 2013, utilised a twin plate clutch with further refinements in software calibration and hydraulic actuation, delivering a smoother driving experience.

In a world where 'true automatics' are commonplace, not everyone appreciated that these automated manuals needed to be driven like a manual rather than an automatic, as demonstrated rather well by Jeremy Clarkson on *Top Gear* some 22 years ago! If only he'd spoken with Les Goble first (AM's performance driving executive 2000-2016) who has helpfully written driving guides for these cars (still available), enabling their owners to understand and get the best out of them. Bar the starting procedure, (let the engine idle in neutral for 10 seconds before selecting gear to allow the TCU to update its bite point for the clutch), the key theme is to treat the car like a manual.

When applying gentle throttle for slow manoeuvres, the clutch slips, so try to keep this to a minimum, especially in crawling traffic. Put the car in neutral if stationary, such as at traffic lights, and apply the handbrake if stopping on an incline. This is important with the Vanquish and Sportshift 1 cars because the clutch can otherwise overheat (Sportshift 2 and 3 has hill start assist).

For a smooth upshift, gently ease off the throttle during the gearchange, then progressively reapply the throttle. The aim is to be on a balanced throttle – neither accelerating or decelerating at the point of upshift, just as you would with a traditional manual.

In ASM / D / (automated mode) you can induce and smooth up changes by gently lifting off and reapplying the throttle.

To conclude, Aston's automated manuals are often unfairly criticised but if driven as designed they offer a direct and engaging driving experience.

After growing up with these cars, Guy is a director at The Chiltern Aston Centre, established Aston Martin specialist and Heritage Partner (chilternaston.co.uk)

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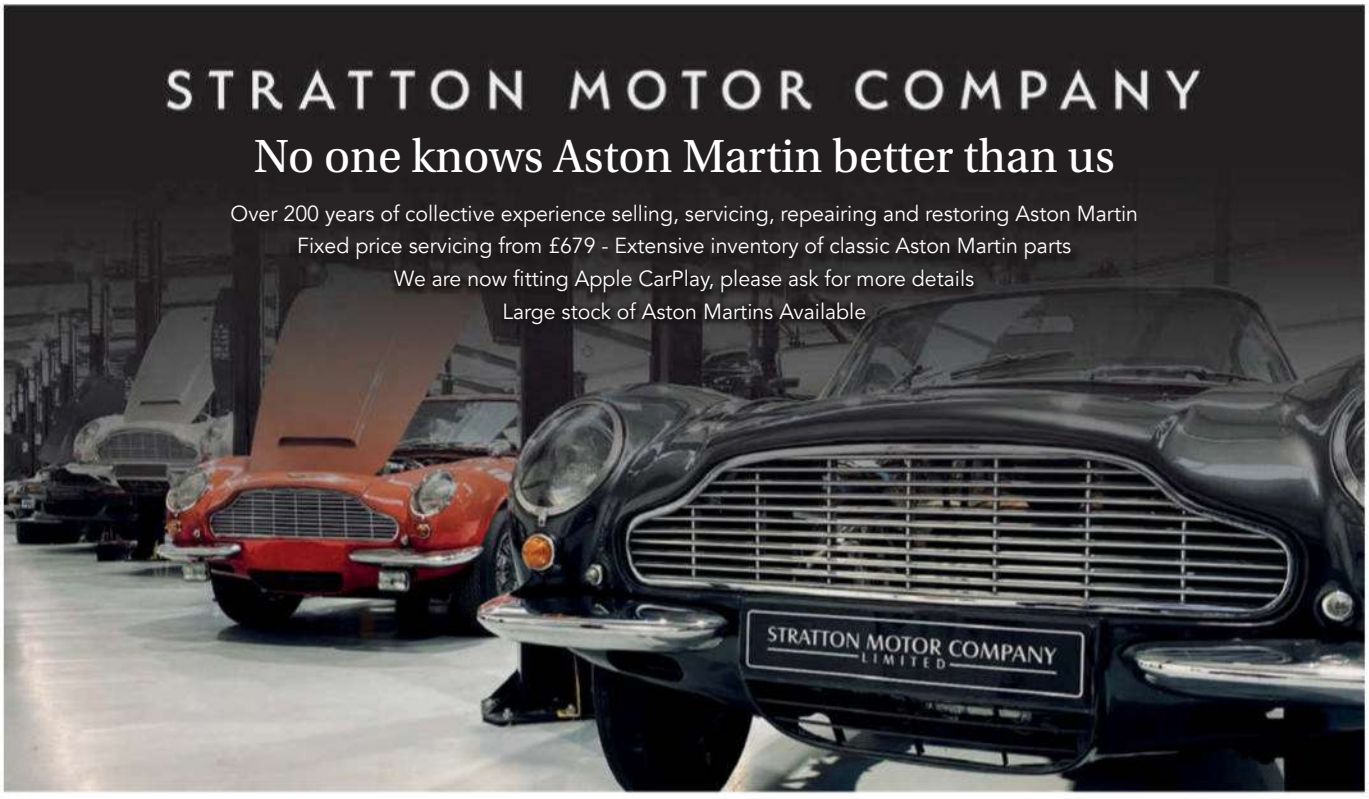

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ASTON MARTIN HERITAGE

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LOOKING BACK

Paul Walton remembers his ten favourites of the many cars he's driven during his two and a half years editing Aston Martin Driver before finishing with the one he'd rather forget

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

ONE OF the best aspects of editing AMD since mid-2022 has been the many models I've been lucky enough to drive. From a pre-war model to relatively new cars, iconic names to some of Aston Martin's arguably lesser-known models, I've covered a fair proportion of the company's output during my time at the helm. To mark that time coming to an end, I'm looking back at my ten favourite models, the cars that for one reason or another impressed me the most. While most will come as no surprise, there's also a couple of left-field choices which not only represents the diversity of Aston Martin's cars but also my time with the title.

10 DB2 Vantage
ISSUE TEN

As the first model to have the famous DB name (the earlier 2-Litre has only become known as the 'DB1' retrospectively and unofficially) and the first Aston Martin to be powered by the W.O. Bentley-designed 2.6-litre straight-six, any DB2 is an important car. But with this 1950 example from issue ten having the rare optional Vantage engine (another first for the DB2) plus with a fascinating period racing history in America, it was a very special car. It was beautifully presented, the car's immaculate condition at odds with the number of miles the owners used it for. And with 125bhp compared to the standard car's 105bhp, the uprated 2.6-litre straight-six offered a pleasing chunk of performance, while the handling was flat and with plenty of grip and the steering was perfectly weighted, all resulting in a genuine sports car.

Although not as famous as the iconic models that the brand remains synonymous with, in terms of looks and performance, the DB2 Vantage still set the tone for those later cars and deserves to be not just on my list but on that of anyone looking for a handsome, usable and interesting classic car.

As a long-term enthusiast of the model, I came very close to including the early Virage that I tested way back in issue four, especially since I later discovered it was part of the Hunter Green collection, a group of nine different Aston Martins that had been commissioned in 1987 by a private buyer to celebrate 21 years of V8 production in 1990 and were all painted the same colour.

Yet I can't ignore the extra power and muscular presence that the Vantage version I drove four issues later offered, especially since it had the optional 600bhp power upgrade, 50bhp more than standard, which resulted in a genuine beast of a car. Although not the most powerful car I've ever driven, thanks to a lack of driver aids and being rear-wheel drive, I'll admit I approached the car in the same hesitant way an experienced cowboy might an angry steer. Yet it was surprisingly forgiving to drive and could trundle through traffic with a refinement I wasn't expecting. However, when I put the hammer down, despite expecting it, the forcefulness of the acceleration still took my breath away.

A genuine weapons-grade car that I won't forget in a hurry.

09
Vantage V600
ISSUE EIGHT

08
DB4 prototype
ISSUE TEN

Preferring cars that are a genuine part of automotive history, in the past I have driven the earliest known E-type, the one-off XJ13 plus a unique Jensen-based prototype built by Vignale called the Nova. And so, as a prototype DB4, this blue example from 1958 equally fits that bill.

Number seven of the 15 prototypes produced, it is currently the oldest known DB4 in the UK and is as important in Aston Martin's history as some hitherto unknown preliminary sketches of the Mona Lisa would be for Leonarda da Vinci experts. If that wasn't enough, the car was also used by both the chairman, (Sir) David Brown, plus the company's marketing department for sales literature before becoming a demonstrator when it had a brief role in the 1960 British film *Too Hot to Handle*.

Yet none of this is why the DB4 is here because for all the car's significance, it was just simply fantastic to drive. The DB4 was the first car to have both Touring's Superleggera bodywork of aluminium panels on a lightweight tubular frame plus Tadek Marek's 3.7-litre meaning all DB4s perform beautifully and this one, restored 15 years ago by marque experts Aston Workshop, was no different. With its torquey engine, excellent handling and sharp steering, it was the best of all the standard David Brown era cars that I have tested.

Most of my job is hard work and a lot of perseverance but sometimes there's also a little luck. The latter was definitely in play when the Vanquish S owner I'd contacted happened to live close to what's considered to be one of the best driving roads in the UK, the Cat and Fiddle. As a 12-mile-long piece of twisting, turning, and twirling tarmac that cuts through the Peak District National Park, linking Buxton with Macclesfield, it was the perfect location to test this V12-engined supercar. Even the weather was kind despite the shoot being in April.

With the Vanquish feeling as at home in this desolate location as Rafael Nadal obviously does on the tennis court, the road showed the car off at its best. Fast and responsive, I got to grips with the often-criticised auto-shift manual gearbox, finding it aided the car's performance (although if I'm being honest, it didn't always go smoothly when the car would lurch awkwardly, and I'd apologise to the owner). Despite the car's considerable size, with this being the first Aston Martin to have a lightweight bonded aluminium chassis, it also had fantastic handling and I'm not exaggerating when I say I could have driven up and down the Cat and Fiddle all day.

06 Vantage GT8

ISSUE THIRTEEN

From a bright yellow 4.7 belonging to a friend of mine in issue five to an example fitted with Prodrive's handling updates in issue nine, I could have included any number of the many Vantages I've driven over my two and a half years editing AMD. However, it's the GT8 from issue 13 that gets the nod due to its sheer outrageousness.

Not only was the blue and orange paintwork eye-wateringly bright but the rear spoiler was large enough to serve tea on. Together with its seven-spoke centre-lock magnesium wheels it looked every inch the competition car and thankfully had the performance to match.

With the power of the 4.7 V8 massaged to produce 440bhp – another ten over the Vantage S – and the GT8 weighing 100kg lighter, the result was a very fast car even by Vantage standards. As I said in my test, "The resultant acceleration is hard and uncompromising, the car surging forward with eagerness that is missing from even a Vantage S." With the same axle as the V12 Vantage, plus stiffer springs and dampers, the handling was sharp and accurate meaning I could enter corners with a surprising amount of momentum.

Although not the fastest car I've driven during my time at AMD (that was probably the DBS V12 in issue 12), the GT8 was undoubtedly the most fun.

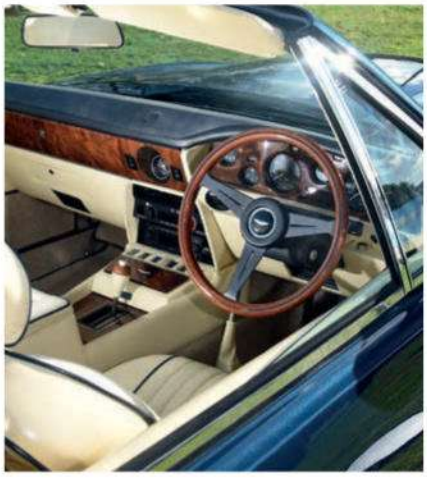
With me putting issue five together in September 2022, around the same time as HRH King Charles III came to the throne, I thought it was the perfect time to feature a car that was directly linked to the new monarch.

When the then Prince of Wales ordered a then new Vantage Volante in 1986, he didn't want the car's over-the-top bodykit, preferring the look of the standard convertible instead. Aston Martin fulfilled his wish by producing a Volante which, other than having slightly flared arches to cover wider alloys, looked standard but still had the Vantage engine.

Although a special order for the future King, perhaps unsurprisingly other owners wanted the same thing and so the company produced a further 21 examples, which today are known as the Prince of Wales spec.

Despite tiny numbers, I managed to track a beautiful Windsor Blue example for sale through a specialist, the only one fitted with a three-speed automatic gearbox, the rest all having manuals. Although it did take away some of the V8's huge power, the car was still immensely fast, its power at odds with the Volante's style and elegance.

Unlike some of the cars mentioned, their rarity and high values means I doubt I'll drive another so I'm glad I took the opportunity when I did.



05
Volante Prince of Wales
ISSUE FIVE

04
Rapide AMR
ISSUE FIFTEEN

Ever since issue ten when I'd compared an earlyish Rapide with a Bentley Flying Spur, I'd always been impressed by the four-door saloon, thinking it offered the best performance, best handling yet also the most comfort of all the VH cars. So, when I was offered the chance to drive a rare AMR model over the summer of 2024, considering just 188 were made and of those a mere 44 were in right-hand drive, I couldn't turn it down.

Although thanks to a larger front splitter, rear diffuser and bootlid lip spoiler plus enormous 21in alloys as well as having lowered, stiffer suspension, the AMR has more of an aggressive appearance than a standard car, yet it retained all of the comfort and refinement that initially drew me to the Rapide in the first place. It was also better built, too, and the car's biggest Achilles heel – the cheap-looking centre console – was replaced by a single piece of carbon fibre.

But a 595bhp version of Aston Martin's 5.9-litre V12 (the last car that the venerable unit was fitted to) meant it was also immensely fast.

Include the slightly increased interior space that the Rapide offers over a Vantage or DB9 and it results in a highly desirable combination.

03
DB5 V8 prototype
ISSUE EIGHT

Of all the Aston Martins I have driven over the last two and a half years, the one I feel the most honoured to have experienced is the unique DB5 V8 prototype from 1966. Not only is it another important moment in the company's history but its current six-figure value puts it in the top five of the most expensive cars I've ever driven.

Built to develop Tadek Marek's 5.3-litre V8 in the mid-Sixties, Aston Martin's Experimental department took a DB6 platform and removed the rear end to create a new one that would accept either the existing live axle or the De Dion arrangement, which was being assessed for the future DBS. Leftover DB5 panels then clothed the chassis but since the DB6 was 4in longer, it needed extra bodywork between the door and rear wheelarch. Even more confusingly, a grille from a DB4 was used presumably because there was one in the workshop. Despite being a development mule, the car wasn't destroyed when its work was done and after a varied life was restored in the 2000s.

With it being lighter than the later V8 models, it was immensely fast, having the same sort of raw power as a Sixties British GT with an American V8 such as the Jensen C-V8 or a Gordon-Keeble and I loved every moment behind the wheel.

There's a small postscript to this: I was so pleased I'd driven the car but hadn't crashed it that I totally forgot to pick up my camera which was on the back seat. Only realising when I was halfway home, I had to turn around and head back to the owner's house.

02 Lagonda
ISSUE TEN

One of the main reasons I agreed to take on AMD when I was offered the editorship in early 2022 was so I could feature this Lagonda. As a long admirer of William Towns' work, I had previously written about several of his other creations including a clever Mini-based concept – the Minissima from 1972 – plus three redesigned Jaguars; the Guyson E12 that was based on a 1973 E-type Series 3 plus the Railton Fairmile and Claremont which were both rebodied XJ-S convertibles. The one I'd always been desperate to add to this list was this big saloon.

In mid-2023, I sourced an early example of Towns' wedged masterpiece, a magnificent gold car from 1980. With its hard angles and uncompromising shape, it really is like nothing else ever designed before or since and even his other cars that featured the 'folded paper' style of design were subtle by comparison. This is mainly due to the car's size – absolutely huge, you could land a plane on the bonnet.

Expecting it to feel soft and wallowy like a Daimler Double Six, I was pleasantly surprised to discover the opposite was true, the steering having the weight and accuracy of a genuine sports car while the always-composed chassis allowed me to swoop through a series of fast S-bend corners with remarkable speed. And although the Lagonda weighs a hefty 2,024kg, the keenness of its acceleration thanks to the 5.3-litre V8 was a shock.

I've driven several of my favourite cars over the years, most of which have been a disappointment. The Lagonda, though, was everything I'd hoped it would be and more.

Considering which is my least favourite (see the next page), the car in the number one slot might surprise you: the DB7 Vantage GT.

Firstly, I reckon the DB7 is still one of the prettiest cars ever designed in the UK and the late Vantage GT model with its large five-spoke alloys and discreet ducktail rear spoiler all help to give the usually feminine car a more masculine appearance.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the DB7's debut at the 1993 Geneva Motor Show, since issue six of AMD went on sale early the following year, in late 2022 I sourced a very late car to compare with the magazine's own 1997 straight-six model. With the supplying dealer located outside Malton, we headed into the desolate North York Moors National Park for the photography.

I'd driven a GT before, way back in 2003 when the mainstream magazine I was working for at the time took one plus a Ferrari F360 to several European racetracks. Two decades later, it was good to be reunited with the big GT, still liking both its comfortable interior – clearly better built than our early model – supple ride quality, yet with a six-speed manual transmission and the uprated 435bhp version of the 5.9-litre V12, it had been transformed into a genuine sports car.

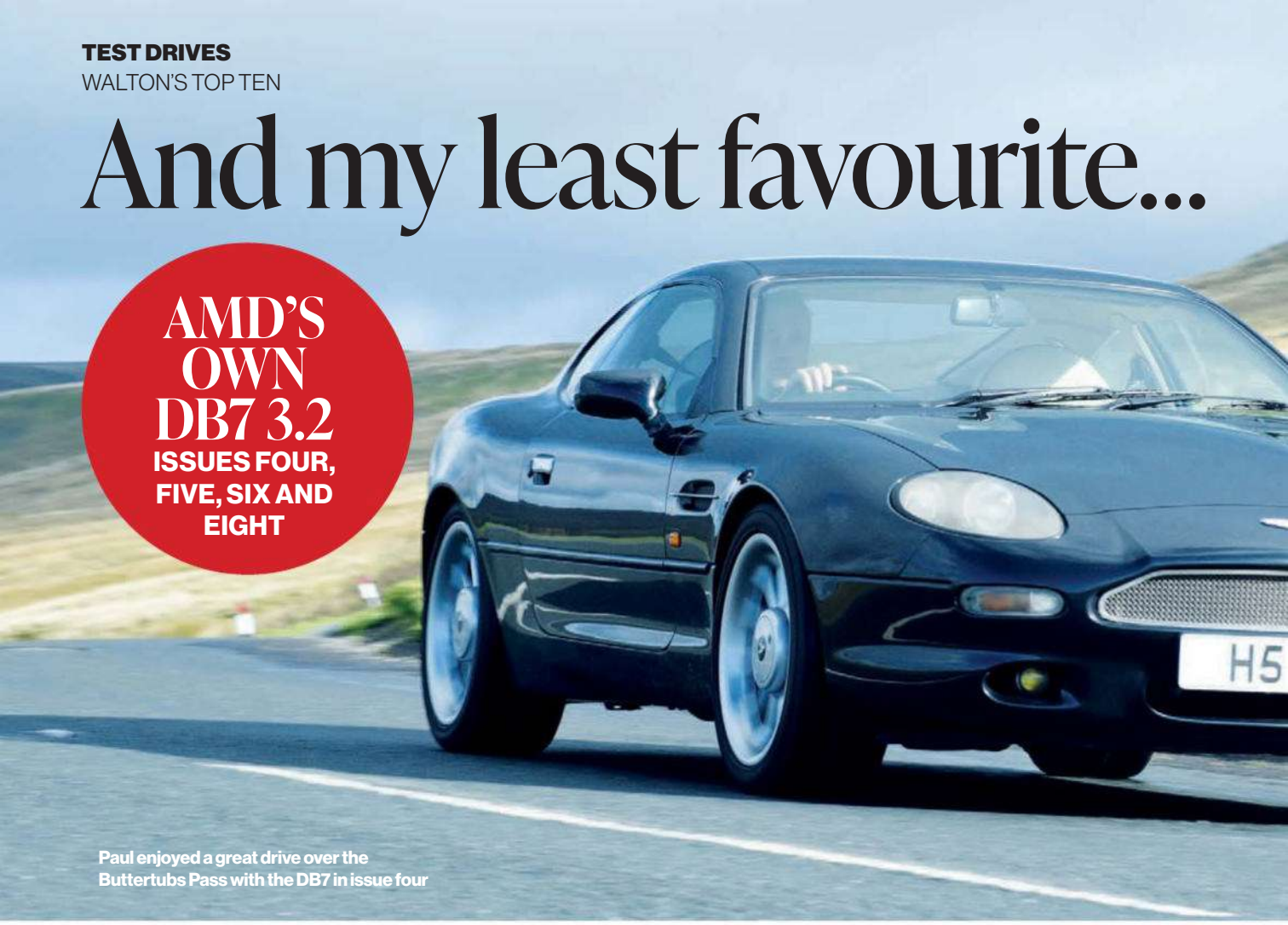
Combined, this resulted in the most highly desirable Aston Martin of the many I've driven over the past 30 months and the one I'd genuinely consider buying.

01 DB7 Vantage GT

ISSUE SIX

And my least favourite...

AMD'S OWN DB7 3.2
ISSUES FOUR, FIVE, SIX AND EIGHT



Paul enjoyed a great drive over the Buttertubs Pass with the DB7 in issue four

When the magazine debuted in early 2022, Kelsey Publishing bought an Aston Martin DB7 3.2 which, as editor, would be my responsibility. Initially more excited than a kid at Christmas, the car quickly proved to be more of a disappointment than unwrapping several pairs of paisley socks.

Immediately needing the supercharger to be rebuilt, it took until the summer before it was ready. But with my family and I taking our first family holiday since the Covid-19 pandemic, it wasn't for another three weeks before I finally collected the car from Kelsey's Kent head office where it had stood motionless for some time. Unsurprisingly, the battery was dead, requiring a trip to a well-known automotive parts shop to buy a new one.

With the black DB7 having power once again, I set off for home, giving me a chance to look around my surroundings. Not only was the leather upholstery worn and frayed in several places, but I fell about laughing when I noticed the roof lining was held in place with several rows of recessed buttons meaning it looked like a Chesterfield sofa. Other faults included the driver's side window not always opening when the door was open plus the air-conditioning being less effective than a cheap electric fan in the Nevada desert.

The interior was badly frayed and worn in several areas

Worse still, following a lorry carrying large bales of straw saw the car come close to overheating when the loose strands floating up and down the motorway covered the grille.

And then when I was just 30 miles away from home, the car started to lurch forward before stopping for good, stranding me on the M11's hard shoulder. The technician that came to my aid quickly diagnosed a faulty alternator and so fitted a new battery to get me home and after charging the one I'd just bought, I was able to drive the car to my local garage to be repaired. Despite its faults, the black DB7 was always hard-working and appeared

Another breakdown, this time at the A1/M62 junction when the crank position sensor popped off

The grille becoming covered in straw saw the engine temperature rise

It took until late evening of the same day for Paul and the car to be finally relayed home

The moment Paul collected the car in September 2022, when it needed a new battery

in several features. These included a drive over one of my favourite roads, the Buttertubs Pass in North Yorkshire, a twin test with a BMW 840i, appearing alongside a Vantage GT for the DB7's 30th anniversary and finally as part of another twin test with a late Jaguar XJS 4.0.

But following the Buttertubs Pass shoot in October 2022, it stopped again, this time at the busy intersection where the A1 meets the M62. Although due to the dangerous location, I was quickly recovered and dropped off at the local services, but it took me several hours to be relayed home. My garage soon discovered the crankshaft position sensor had somehow come loose and so the car was soon back on the road.

Yet there were highlights including a fantastic drive after the shoot with the GT when, late for a party, I pushed the car harder than I had done before, yet it responded well, feeling like the sports car it was always meant to be. The DB7 was eventually sold at auction in early 2023. Other than not being able to say, "I have an Aston Martin in my garage," I can't say I have missed it. **AMD**

PR

How far do you go when asked to restore a rare DB5 Vantage that doesn't appear to have been meddled with?

WORDS ROB HAWKINS
PHOTOGRAPHY STEPHEN ARCHER AND SPRAY TEC

ESERVATION OVERHAUL

WHEN ASTON Martin specialist Stephen Archer was asked to manage the restoration of an extremely rare DB5 Vantage, he had an in-depth conversation with the owner to decide what should be preserved and what must be replaced. As Stephen made clear, "This is a discussion that should be had around every restoration, originality is very important and it can only be original once."

In the case of the DB5 Vantage seen here, it appeared to be unmolested when it was inspected for its restoration. "It's always better to start with a car that has previously been untouched," explains Stephen, who restored his first Aston Martin, a DB6 Mk2 Volante, back in 1975 and was racing Astons three years later. Having owned almost every classic DB and lost count of how many he has restored, the DB5 seen here was, as is usually the case with such projects, special and interesting.

This particular DB5 Vantage was rare on account of it being left-hand drive and finished in Silver Birch when new. Only 17 LHD DB5 Vantages were made and the number of those in this colour combination were produced in single digits. This is not just another DB5.

Finding an example that hasn't been restored before was as much of a bonus as a relief. "There's always more to do if it has already been restored," he says, reflecting on the fact that you often have to unpick work that hasn't been completed to your own standards or to the correct specification.

Despite the luck of starting with an unmolested example, the plan to restore the vehicle wasn't simply to replace everything. "We didn't rechrome things that didn't need rechroming," he recalls and goes on to explain why particular aspects of the car were left, such as the dashboard with its key scratches around the ignition. It was important to restore the car to look, feel and smell like an Aston Martin from 1965 and not a brand-new re-created classic.

One of the most difficult challenges in achieving this aim concerned the interior and the leather upholstery. "The leather was restored by cleaning it, taking the top surface off to get better breathing into it, then adding oil treatment to make it supple again," Stephen explains. "There are a few places where we couldn't save the leather, such as the door panels, so we had to use new Connolly leather. We then recoloured all the leather as Connolly would have originally done."

Climate preservation

With the previous owner of the DB5 Vantage having lived in Portugal, it was hoped that the hot, dry weather had preserved the bodywork and saved it from corrosion. The structure of the DB5 is a complicated mixture of steel and aluminium. There's a steel chassis, incorporating the floors, sills (inner only, outers are aluminium), bulkheads and the rear inner wheelarches. On top of that is the famous Superleggera (Italian for superlight) steel framework that's like a spaceframe chassis, followed by the exterior panelling, which is all made from aluminium.

A comprehensive stripdown of a DB5's bodyshell isn't as easy as it sounds. Those aluminium exterior panels aren't bolted in situ so they need to be carefully removed to get to the framework and chassis underneath.

Fortunately, typical repairs such as replacing outriggers, jacking points or rear radius arm mounts, or even fixing a rotten floor or rear inner arch can often be completed without having to strip the entire bodywork.

Some aspects can be more complicated than anticipated, such as the steel wire inside the lip of each rear wheelarch, which is used to roll the aluminium edge. If this corrodes, then the surgery involved in opening the aluminium, chopping out the steel wire, replacing it and re-forming the arch lip will easily take a working week to complete.

There are a few telltale signs to indicate whether a DB5 has been repaired before or the bodywork dismantled. Look for cut lines a couple of inches above the waistline across the A- and C-pillars. If the body has been removed, the aluminium exterior is cut here to remove it and should have been neatly welded together afterwards.

Rollover jig enabled all aspects of the stripped bodyshell to be assessed and worked on

Accident damage is another issue that can cause headaches for a future owner. Panel gaps help to see if anything is damaged or has been changed, but not everything should be treated with suspicion. A crushed jacking point, for example, may simply have been caused by corrosion or weakening of the metal and therefore needs replacing.

In the case of the DB5 seen here, it had escaped very lightly from both corrosion and accident damage. Stephen recalls that there were signs of a very light impact at the front, although he suspects it could have been from something as small as a shopping trolley. Some of the steel underneath, including the jacking points, needed replacing, and the steel inner sills were replaced as a matter of precaution. Similarly, the aluminium door skins were replaced, which is standard practice because corrosion between the frame and the skin can only be seen with the skin off.

This DB5 was sent to an independent Aston restoration specialist, Spray Tec Restorations (www.spray-tecrestorations.co.uk), for them to strip and fully assess the condition of it. This involved removing all the mechanical components, the entire interior and even the gearbox tunnel cover and riveted front floor/footwell panels (they are removable to make it easier to install the pedals for a LHD or RHD model).

Adrian George at Spray Tec recalls the condition of the bodywork was indeed good, but it was decided to correctly rectify the minor damage to the front end. This involved cutting and removing the entire front of the bodywork (the nose) to be able to access the metal framework behind it. This area can suffer from corrosion, so the best way to access it is to cut the bodywork off.

Alan Pointer of Bodylines Specialist Panel Beaters (www.bodylinesltd.co.uk) was in charge of the bodywork repairs, in particular, cutting off the front end of the aluminium bodywork. He used an oscillating cutter to neatly slice down the front wings, but he also had to unpick the aluminium from where it wraps around the steel channels adjacent to the bonnet line.

Once the metal framework at the front could be fully seen, it and the rest of the

bodyshell was sent for sandblasting to help expose any corrosion. Fortunately, the tubular grille-shaped framework at the front could be saved and only needed to be repaired.

The rear valance had some corrosion, which according to Alan is typical for the DB5. He explains that there's a gap between each rear inner wing and the steel framework, which Aston Martin filled during production with a piece of felt. This inevitably gets damp and creates the perfect conditions for corrosion between the steel and aluminium.

TIG welding was used to fit the new door skins and to also reattach the front end of the bodywork. Alan says that he often uses gas welding (it's softer than TIG welding) when making and fitting new panels, but only when he can get to both sides of the weld to be able to wash off the flux that's used in the process because it's highly corrosive to aluminium.

Before the front end was refitted, the exposed steel framework was painted with a red oxide primer. The bodyshell was then returned to Spray Tec, who applied more of this primer to the rest of the chassis, including the interior and engine bay. This traditional factory method of applying red oxide (also known as red lead) primer helps to protect the metalwork and prepare it for its final coat of gloss black in the engine bay, whereas the interior remains a matt finish close to the colour of tomato soup.

With the bodyshell complete, but yet to be painted, the next stage was to trial-fit several parts (known as a dry build), such as the exterior chromework, glass, lighting and several components in the engine bay. This helps to identify problems with parts, enabling adjustments of the bodywork and those parts to be made. It's easier to do it at this stage instead of when you're faced with a freshly painted bodyshell that may get damaged.

Satisfied that the bodywork was in good enough shape to be refitted with all its components, it was time to respray it, which was completed at Spray Tec Restorations. This is an involved and time-consuming process, which in brief, started with chemically cleaning the bodyshell before rubbing it down and applying an etch primer, followed by a high-build

Following the repairs, the chassis areas were coated in the traditional red lead, and the engine bay was finished in gloss black

The front end was cut off to repair the steel framework behind it, the aluminium door skins were replaced as a matter of course (the hidden framework cannot be checked without removing the skins) and the rear valance was replaced because it was corroded

primer. Various blocks and abrasive papers were used to rub down this high-build primer to achieve a smooth shape. This is easier said than done and looking at the restoration photographs of what appears to be the bodyshell with a mottled blue exterior, reveals all the high and low spots identified during this process.

When the shape of the bodywork had been achieved, it was time to apply a wet primer (a similar primer to before, but it doesn't have the high-build effect), which was wet-flatted before the base coat was applied, followed by two-pack clear lacquer. "Being a historic restoration company, our preferred painting product continues to be solvent based wherever possible," explains Adrian. "I just prefer the period look, the way the metallic lays on a historic vehicle against modern water-based paints."

After leaving the bodyshell to bake, all that was required was a flat and polish, which still took approximately a full working week. Then the careful job of reassembly commenced.

Drivetrain

The DB5 wasn't running when it arrived and with no knowledge of how good or bad the engine, gearbox and rear axle were, Stephen recommended having them all reconditioned, sending them to Aston Engineering in Derby.

The 3,995cc straight-six twin-cam engine can leak oil around the camshaft covers, sump and between the engine and gearbox (rear main oil seal). The engine block has weep holes, which shouldn't be blocked and may leak coolant. This Vantage engine had no serious issues but a rebuild means that the owner has years of trouble-free driving.

This DB5 was equipped with a ZF five-speed manual gearbox, which Stephen says is a strong assembly that can be slightly chattery at idle, and with the availability of parts being good, it was a wise move to at least have it stripped and inspected. The same principle was applied to the Salisbury 4HA rear axle, which is known to leak oil, often caused by a blocked breather hole or a blown seal.

The Vantage's engine specification is upgraded when compared to a standard DB5's engine, including a different profile for the camshafts inside the upgraded high-compression cylinder head and three Weber carburettors. This car has SU carburettors fitted, which is stated on the build sheet, making it very unusual.

The engine upgrades added to the DB5

Vantage meant that it had an impressive 315bhp at the flywheel, which was 33bhp more than the standard 282bhp engine model. It could accelerate from stationary to 60mph in 6.5 seconds (the standard DB5 claimed 8 seconds) and went on to a top speed of 150mph (the standard DB5 was 6mph less).

Brakes & suspension

The braking system on the DB5 was modern for the Sixties, incorporating solid discs all round with Girling calipers, and it was also advanced, comprising two vacuum-operated brake servos – one for the front circuit and the second for the rear.

Similarly advanced for its time is the DB5's suspension. At the front is an arrangement of upper and lower wishbones and arms, a coilover shock absorber assembly and an anti-roll bar.

The rear suspension consists of a banjo live axle containing the aforementioned Salisbury 4HA differential, which is

Before the bodyshell was painted, a trial-fit of many of the components was conducted to determine whether adjustments were required. It was better to do this at this stage instead of waiting and having to work with fresh paintwork

Weeks of preparation led up to the eventual respray using solvent-based paint and two-pack lacquer

secured with upper and lower forward-mounted trailing/radius arms. Lateral location is controlled by a Watt's link comprising two arms fitted to the centre of the axle. The suspension on this DB5 was totally overhauled and kept standard.

Having acquired a copy of the original build sheet for this DB5, Stephen had something to work to. At times, this took a little figuring out, such as a set of French-manufactured Marchal spot lamps that were fitted to the car when it arrived. Despite the fact that this DB5 was destined to live in France after it had been restored, the owner decided to leave them off, but keep them of course.

One aspect of this DB5 that was altered concerned its electrics. Having originally used a positive earth 12V system, this was changed to negative earth.

Careful and meticulous reassembly couldn't be rushed. The engine, gearbox and rear axle had all been overhauled, along with the suspension and brake components

As much of the original interior as possible was revived and reused

Completed in June 2024, having arrived some 18 months before, the entire project from start to finish had been completed in a relatively short time

Having arrived in December 2022, the DB5 Vantage was collected in June 2024, some 18 months since the restoration had started, which is a reasonably short time for such a huge undertaking.

"This car was restored for someone who had never had an Aston before but knew what he wanted," says Stephen. "It was a great project that he took a very close interest in. Seeing his smile after the test drive made it all the more worthwhile."

And reminiscing, Stephen recalls, "I saw DB5s on the line back in the 1960s, so to be able to bring this back to as-new condition but with full respect to how an Aston should be done, that was a great pleasure. As is usual, I tested the car extensively before it was handed over to the owner. To be driving such a car after a full restoration and yet with a largely unchanged interior was a special feeling." **AMD**

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Two DB4GT Projects

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ASTON MARTIN DRIVER MAGAZINE BOOKAZINES FOR 2025

2025: MOTORSPORT SPECIAL

ON SALE: FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY

From its pre-war cars to the company's current Formula One effort, this special issue celebrates Aston Martin's long and successful history in motorsport

SUMMER 2025: DB MODEL RANGE

This collector's issue is in honour of Aston Martin's eight-decade-old DB range, looking at every model from the original 'DB1', through to the iconic DB5 and the recent DB12

ON SALE: FRIDAY 30 MAY

PRACTICAL PURPOSES

Aston Martin has only produced two five-door cars in its long history; the Rapide and the DBX. To discover which of these more practical models we prefer, we're comparing an S version of the saloon with an early example of the SUV

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

WITH ASTON Martin's post-war range consisting largely of two-door coupes and convertibles, they've traditionally been less practical than hiking in flip-flops, doing the weekly shop on a scooter or eating a roast dinner with chopsticks.

The two cars that finally broke this mould are the 2010 Rapide that was followed by the DBX a decade later. As the company's first five-door saloon and sports utility vehicle, they offer considerably more interior room than anything that came before them meaning, although they're from slightly different periods in the company's recent history, if you're wanting a practical Aston Martin, they're the only real choice.

So, to discover which of these two very different yet practical Aston Martins we prefer, we're comparing a Rapide S with an early DBX. And to make it more interesting, we're doing so in the snow.

Originally shown in concept form as far back as the 2006 North American Auto Show, the production version of Aston Martin's new five-door saloon didn't arrive for another four years. Following the DB9, V8 Vantage and DBS, it was the fourth and the final car to use the bonded VH architecture, but by being 250mm longer than the DB9 it created enough room for not only two rear seats but also rear doors plus a 317-litre boot. With the exception of the rare coach-built DB5, DB6 and DBS shooting brakes, all of this made the new car the most practical ever to come from Aston Martin, putting the Rapide in a very different market from its similar-looking siblings.

"The entire family can enjoy their Aston Martin together in unison," explained the company's then chairman, Dr Ulrich Bez, at the time of the car's German debut at the Geneva Show, "in an invigorating yet comfortable environment, sitting low, with plenty of visibility from every seat and with new levels of comfort, refinement and entertainment."

Although the idea of a five-door Aston Martin was new, around 60 percent of its chassis and powertrain – comprising of the engine, transmission and much of the front section up to the windscreen – was carried over from the DB9. And so the Rapide's 6.0-litre V12 was the same 470bhp version as found in the coupe which, with the standard six-speed automatic gearbox (there was never a manual option), resulted in a 0-60mph time of 5.3 seconds and a 188mph top speed, similar figures to its two-door counterpart.

Although originally used by Lagonda in the Thirties and again 30 years later for the beautiful but low-volume DB4-based saloon of 1961, even its name was an old one.

At £139,950 in 2010, the Rapide was £20k more expensive than a DB9 and £45,000 over that of a Porsche Panamera 4.4 V8 Turbo. Yet as a new kind of more practical Aston Martin, its roomier interior together with its impressive performance and excellent handling saw the car praised by the critics. "Its front end is faithful and accurate and although there's occasional mild kickback through the rim, the ideally weighted steering feels more natural than that of any other recent Aston," said *Evo* at the time. "Its chassis is especially good in the transient moves, flicking left, right, left, which highlights the car's precision and the no-nonsense way the suspension deals with the surface."

Due to Aston Martin's Gaydon factory being close to capacity, production for the new car was handed over to the Austrian contract manufacturer Magna Steyr, to be built at its state-of-the-art factory near Graz, the first time an Aston Martin had been fully assembled outside of the UK. "Getting the Rapide model has been great news for Graz and there is a lot of excitement in the factory," said the man in charge of the car's production in Austria, Helmut Wagner, in late 2009. "And now we are testing the car on local roads, it is also causing a stir in the city." But due to the car not meeting its estimated sales of 2,000 a year, in 2012 production was transferred to Gaydon. To try and improve things, in 2013 and after 2,872 Rapides had been built, Aston Martin revealed a more powerful S model that featured a 550bhp version of the V12, dropping its 0-60mph time down to 4.7 seconds and a 190mph top speed. "Once the engine does come on song – the blue touchpaper moment is probably around 4,000rpm – it's an awesome thing," was *Evo's* view, "with linear and seemingly unrelenting thrust plus a soundtrack that could reanimate the recently deceased."

Thanks to a wider and deeper grille, the nose was more assertive while at the rear there was a new deck profile that included a more pronounced bootlid 'flip'. Said Bez at the time of the car's debut at the 2013 Geneva Motor show, "The car's stunning visual appeal is now matched by a much more powerful and yet more efficient engine – our exceptional new AM11 V12 – which increases massively both the excitement and performance potential of the Rapide S." It needed to; at a little under £150k, it made the car a whopping 60 grand more than the new Porsche Panamera GTS.

It might be a decade old, but the 2014 example shown here shows what a handsome car the Rapide still is and due

to its very elegant, swoopy proportions, hides the fact it's a saloon and from a distance, it appears more like a coupe. Despite having two more doors, by sharing many design cues with its two-door siblings, it's still every inch the Aston Martin. I don't think anyone would disagree with me when I say it's better looking than the Panamera, making the Rapide the clear choice for anyone who wants a fast, practical yet handsome performance car.

Yet when I lift the tailgate, not only is the boot relatively narrow but it's also stepped, the lower section being opposite the hatch making it difficult to heave heavy shopping bags over the frame and down into it. Although no larger than a small hatchback, rolling the rear seats forwards increases the space to a more usable 886 litres, but this does negate the reason for buying a Rapide over a DB9. Not that the back seats are particularly practical. Only offering limited legroom, the height of the front seats obstructs the forward view more than if I was holding a snowboard, plus due to the bottom of the rear windows curving upwards towards the C-pillar, the rear feels very claustrophobic.

The layout of the dash might be identical to the 470bhp model that I compared with a Bentley Flying Spur in issue ten, but the extra Piano Black covering the bottom half of the centre console results in it looking and feeling classier. Yet by using much of the same switchgear as the DB9 that first arrived in 2004, there's no denying the interior is starting to look and feel relatively old-fashioned.

The Rapide S moves with all the elegance you'd expect from a big GT like this, beautifully riding over the many imperfections in the road in the same way a Jaguar XK or Mercedes-Benz SL would. This serenity changes, though, when I nail the throttle. The V12 might not respond as quickly as the 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 used in today's Aston Martins, but when the six-speed automatic 'box finally kicks down a couple of gears and the engine releases its huge amounts of firepower, the acceleration is supernaturally hard, the engine having an eagerness not usually associated with a lazy V12. It's loud, too, filling the cabin with a gloriously deep yet melodic growl.

Due to new pedestrian protection regulations at the time of the Rapide S's development, Aston Martin needed to lower the engine in the chassis by 19mm which helped to improve the car's already low centre of gravity. And so although the slippery roads stop me from exploring the car's full potential, it's still clear this together with its nicely balanced and accurate steering plus electronically controlled dampers that arrived with the S give the Rapide all the agility of a V8 Vantage.

This performance plus its more spacious interior makes the Rapide S a highly desirable car for anyone who wants an Aston Martin but minus the cramped conditions the brand is famed for. But not long after production of the even faster ▶

AMR ended in 2020 after just two years of production, a new model made its debut that would make the Rapide look like a family hatchback by comparison.

An Aston Martin in thick snow isn't usually a good combination unless you're James Bond in *The Living Daylights*. Even then, his Vantage needed to have skis to escape the Czech police who were chasing the British spy in several Lada Rivas. But this car is as different from 007's as I am from the suave and handsome Timothy Dalton. As the company's first SUV, the DBX makes easy work of the icy, slushy conditions, its electronically controlled active centre transfer case allowing torque to be moved between the front and rear axles makes me feel considerably more confident than I had been in the rear-wheel-drive Rapide.

This transfer case can vary the torque between 47 percent at the front and 53 percent at the rear to nearly 100 percent being sent to the rear axle when required. This can then be distributed between the left and right rear wheels by an electronically controlled limited-slip differential to maximise traction or dynamic response depending on the driving conditions.

As well as being Aston Martin's first SUV, it was also its first car to have an electronic anti-roll control (eARC) system that replaced the need for traditional anti-roll bars. It helps the big car feel as agile and responsive as the genuine sports models, the body roll – always an off-roader's Achilles heel – is reduced to almost nothing while the steering is perfectly weighted and accurate. Tipping the scales at 2,245kg might sound a lot, but by being 150kg lighter than the Bentley Bentayga, it's relatively light for an SUV, further aiding the car's agility. Plus, with adaptive triple volume air suspension – another first for an Aston Martin – the ride is beautifully supple, gliding over the uneven surfaces like they're a marble tabletop.

Power is courtesy of the same Mercedes-Benz sourced 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 as the Vantage and DB11, only in the DBX it pumps out a healthy 542bhp, 40 more than the sports cars. Eager and free-revving, it's considerably more responsive than the Rapide's 5.9-litre V12 and despite having all-wheel drive, I still feed the power in slowly via the throttle in case I spin the wheels in the icy conditions. The DBX might be the company's first off-roader but in terms

of the car's performance it's worthy of the Aston Martin name, not insulting the brand's heritage in the same way the Toyota iQ-based Cygnet arguably did.

Due to the growth of the market, the company had been thinking about producing an SUV since 2015 when it revealed the DBX Concept at that year's Geneva Show. "Aston Martin must be less dependent on a narrow portfolio and one type of customer," said the company's then chairman, Dr Andy Palmer, at the event's press conference. "The DBX Concept is a challenge to the existing status quo in the high luxury GT segment. It envisages a world, perhaps a world not too far away, when luxury GT travel is not only stylish and luxurious but also more practical, more family-friendly and more environmentally responsible."

Although the concept was a two-door coupe, when the production version arrived five years later it was a traditional five-door SUV, its 1,680mm height (240mm more than the Rapide) making it very different from all other previous Aston Martins. Due to needing to meet certain requirements in interior space and to house the AWD system, all SUVs tend to look the same and the side profile of the DBX could be any number of models. However, by smoothly incorporating the company's famed grille shape, Aston Martin's designers managed to keep the car's ancestry without making it look like a cliché in the same way the Rolls-Royce Cullinan is, while the car's perfect proportions and soft corners mean it's less boxy than other premium SUV models such as the Bentley Bentayga or Lamborghini Urus.

As proof of the importance Aston Martin put on the DBX, not only is its bonded chassis designed specifically for an SUV, but the car is built at an all-new factory at St Athan, 20 miles to the west of Cardiff in South Wales. "During our 103-year history, Aston Martin has become famous for making beautiful hand-crafted cars in England," said Palmer at the time of the factory's announcement in 2016. "Through a detailed evaluation of over 20 potential global locations for this new manufacturing facility, we were consistently impressed with the focus on quality, cost and speed from the Welsh government team. As a great British company, we look forward to St Athan joining Gaydon as our second centre of hand-crafted manufacturing excellence."

When I open the door of this gorgeous dark green example, the quality of the interior is obvious. Beautifully built with nicer materials, I'd argue it's been better put together than the Rapide, the separate panels lining up with more accuracy. Plus, instead of old-fashioned dials, there's a high-resolution digital instrument display while the admittedly Mercedes-Benz sourced switchgear feels better than the plasticky versions in the saloon. The only parts I could see carried over from the earlier generation of cars are the four buttons at the top of the centre console that control the nine-speed ZF automatic gearbox.

Its larger dimensions make it considerably more spacious than the Rapide; not only is legroom increased in the rear and the forward vision better, but at 632 litres behind the rear seats (1,530 when they're rolled over), it has a proper-sized boot which is also wide and totally flat. All of this makes the car much more practical and easier to live with than the Rapide which, together with its performance, results in a highly desirable combination.

Yet is it enough to beat the Rapide that might not be quite as spacious, but is more of a traditional Aston Martin?

VERDICT

With this 2014 Rapide S worth around £40,000 and as a 2021 model, the DBX anywhere between £40k and £60k more, comparing the two is slightly unfair. So let's put the values aside for a moment and judge the pair purely by their personalities.

If space is more important, then the DBX is the clear winner, plus as an SUV, it is one of the few Aston Martins you could use for all seasons and for all reasons, yet its performance remains as impressive as any of the company's sports cars. And finally, by being arguably better built than the Rapide, it feels less like a specialist vehicle made by men in brown coats and more like a genuine premium mainstream model. But this does mean it lacks a little of the Aston Martin character, though; I'm not going to win many friends when I say this, but take away the grille and badges and you could be driving any number of premium SUVs.

That's not something that can be said about the Rapide. A 100 percent Aston Martin because of the VH architecture and V12 engine, and thanks to the way it looks and drives, it could only come from one manufacturer, yet it still offers more room than the other models from the period. Despite the car originally arriving in 2010, the obvious DB9 ancestry means it's starting to feel its age compared to the much newer SUV. It's also more fragile than the DBX and driving this one in the snow felt as appropriate as using a Wedgewood tea set for a kid's birthday party. As a result, the Rapide is quickly being relegated to modern classic status, something to save for the summer. The example used for our images had just been tucked up for the winter when the owner kindly disinterred it for the photoshoot, no doubt ruing his decision when the snow started to fall.

So, when we bring values back to the table, my choice would be this; for the same money as the 2021 DBX, I'd choose a Rapide S for sunny days and an SUV by another manufacturer (a Jaguar F-PACE SVR maybe?) for those that aren't. The saloon's smaller boot might still be akin to hiking in Crocs, but I prefer the fact it's 100 percent an Aston Martin over a more practical but anodyne model.

● **Thanks to: Alan Richell (Rapide S) and David Hoare (DBX) for the use of their cars plus AMOC areas 5 and 22 for helping us find them (www.amoc.co.uk)**

DB XDH
RAPIDE S
777 VOT
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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ROB HAWKINS

FINDING FAME

The star of the Earls Court Motor Show in 1968, Aston Workshop recently found this DBS in a central London lock-up, mid-restoration. We assess the car's prospects

1968 WAS an important milestone for the British motoring industry. Jaguar launched their iconic XJ saloon and Ford unveiled their similarly successful Escort, although at the time, nobody expected these cars would make such a mark in the history books.

Aston Martin had launched the DBS the year before at Blenheim Palace on the 25 September, which was similarly groundbreaking. Designed by William Towns, the muscle car-inspired four-seater was longer and heavier than the DB6 it eventually replaced (axed in 1970) but it evolved to become as iconic and desirable as the DB range. It changed the direction of Aston Martin, helping it to switch from sports car to supercar stardom.

When the Earls Court Motor Show was held in October 1968, Aston Martin's stand displayed a DBS which, according to its paperwork, is the car seen here. Aston Workshop recently bought the car along with another DBS after they were discovered in a lock-up in London, both of which had seen some restoration work by a previous owner.

According to the build sheet for the DBS we're looking at, it was allocated by Aston Martin for use on their Earls Court Motor Show stand. Its exterior paintwork was and still is a shade of Burnt Almond and the leather interior should have a White Gold tinge to it. The louvres behind the rear side windows were only fitted to this era of the DBS (the Mk1 or first generation) to direct airflow into the cabin and were replaced in 1970 with a single louvre above the bootlid. Under the bonnet, there's a familiar 3,995cc straight-six twin-cam engine (note that the V8 engine didn't arrive until spring 1970), which also powered the DB6 that was produced alongside the DBS. However, that engine is now mated to a five-speed ZF manual gearbox, whereas the build sheet states it was originally equipped with a Borg-Warner three-speed automatic.

All models were equipped with a limited-slip differential (LSD), with a 3.54:1 final drive ratio for an automatic gearbox and 3.73:1 for a manual, so it's possible this DBS still has the lower 3.54:1.

Other interesting build sheet data includes power-assisted steering, a Motorola radio and a pair of front seatbelts – in 1968, it only became

mandatory in the UK to fit a seatbelt for the driver's seat. Looking inside this DBS, the White Gold leather upholstery is in good condition for its age, although it's highly likely it has been revived at some point since 1968. There are those aforementioned seatbelts for the front seats and a gearstick with a five-speed pattern displayed on the top along with reverse being an extended first. There's the aforementioned push-button radio and the odometer on the 180mph Smiths speedo reads 63,302.

An online search of this car's MOT history shows that it hasn't been MOT-tested since at least 2005 as there are no digital records for it, and Aston Workshop hasn't found any older MOT certificates either.

As I move this DBS around the car park at Aston Workshop to take photographs, its triple SU-fed engine soon warms up and doesn't falter. I can hear a little noise difference from the clutch release bearing when pressing and releasing the clutch pedal, but there's no issue with gear selection, providing you push the stick hard enough, and there's plenty of travel on the pedal. My clutch release bearing suspicions could be entirely wrong because the ZF 'box can suffer from a noisy layshaft when hot and neutral is selected, which sounds like a chattering sound. Tuning the engine and shimming the layshaft can reduce the noise, but it doesn't appear to be a major issue on this vehicle.

After manoeuvring the DBS between a two-post lift, it's raised, and I can look underneath to discover the true condition of this part-restored piece of history. Judging by the red lead, most of the hard work seems to have been done. There appears to be new outriggers and jacking points, and there are no worrying crunching sounds when the two-post lift's legs are fitted under them to raise this 1,588kg vehicle. At a little over 15 feet long and six feet wide, it should be a large vehicle to raise on a two-post lift, but thanks to a moderate amount of length taken up at the front and rear, the wheelbase isn't that long. It is, however, a big car in all proportions.

There are some welding repairs around the nearside rear mounting point for the

The boot area accommodates the twin fuel tanks and a full-size spare wheel. Judging by the red lead coating on the underside of the boot floor, it has perhaps been cleaned and painted

Watt's linkage (trailing arms) and Aston Workshop says they have been told the sills have been replaced.

The DBS's aluminium exterior covers a steel framework/chassis, which is what can be seen from underneath and, in this case, is largely painted the colour of Heinz tomato soup (traditionally known as red lead or red oxide – a popular primer and rust protection paint).

The common rot spots on the DBS include the sills and outriggers, which seem to have been replaced on this car, along with the floors, footwells and suspension mounting points. Areas that are less easy to inspect, but can also corrode, include the steel A-pillars where the doors are hinged, and the bulkheads.

There's a lot of hidden steel underneath the aluminium exterior, all of which can corrode. Bubbling of the paintwork around the bottom of the A-posts and along the base of the windscreen surround can suggest there's corrosion of the steelwork underneath the aluminium panelling. If water has become trapped inside the doors, then the door bottoms often corrode. The bottom flange of the front and rear wings that rivet to the outer sill can suffer from oxidation, resulting in crumbling metalwork. Similar corrosion

Straight-six 3,995cc twin-cam engine is equipped with triple SU carburettors

The entire exhaust system looks new, although it may have been painted, so it's difficult to determine its age. The handbrake system can be accessed from underneath

Steel floors and footwells are often notorious rot spots, but these appear to have survived

This DBS was originally equipped with a Borg-Warner three-speed automatic transmission, but it has been changed for a ZF five-speed manual

White Gold leather upholstery appears to be in good condition for a vehicle that has over 60k on the clock

around the wheelarches, especially the bottom sections, can arise.

Perhaps the lack of use of this DBS (for at least the last two decades) and its ongoing restoration has preserved it from the worst of any decay, although it's impossible to see what's underneath all of the aluminium outer skin. Arguably, there's always going to be corrosion found somewhere, but it's surely more important to ensure such a vehicle is structurally sound and Aston Workshop has thoroughly inspected the vehicle, explaining, "Our report on this car is positive. It looks like the previous owner had carried out the chassis repairs it needed."

Judging by the wiring that's hanging down, someone has been working underneath the dashboard area. Instruments and switches all appear to be present

Other evidence of restoration work that Aston Workshop has discovered concerns the brakes and suspension. Girling discs and calipers are fitted all round with two separate circuits and vacuum-operated servos for the front and rear. The rear brakes are inboard-mounted and can be worked on from underneath, although there's also an access panel underneath the rear seats. A fly-off handbrake operates the rear brakes, and its cabling is easy to see from underneath with its linkage that's accessible for maintenance. The handbrake on this DBS seems to work well and everything looks clean, suggesting it has been maintained and perhaps replaced. I wouldn't fancy trying to bleed that dual-circuit system.

The DBS's suspension consists of coil springs all round with wishbones, telescopic dampers and an anti-roll bar at the front, whereas at the rear, there's a De Dion axle with a Watt's linkage (four trailing/radius arms) and Armstrong Selectaride lever arm dampers. On this DBS, there's clearly a mixture of old

Outriggers and jacking points look new and don't crunch when raising the vehicle on a two-post lift

Welding work can be seen around the nearside rear mounting point for the lower trailing arm that's part of the Watt's linkage

With the DBS raised on a two-post lift at Aston Workshop, Rob Hawkins takes a closer look at the underside

Bought as a pair, this is the other barn-find DBS that Aston Workshop bought, which has now been sold

Unlike many a modern Aston Martin, there are no undertrays to conceal corrosion from the underside of a DBS

and new components. The front coil springs have some surface corrosion, so they haven't been replaced, but that's not to say they need to be. Some of the arms for the Watt's linkage at the rear look newer than others. And at the front, most of the components for the anti-roll bar look quite new (along with the steering gaiters and track-rod ends). With a price tag of £59,950, this DBS is of course significantly cheaper than one that is ready for the road at around £90,000 or more, but is it worth buying? Its association with the 1968 Earls Court Motor Show undoubtedly raises its collectability and value. Should it only need a respray, which could cost a conservative £10,000, then it does seem like a bargain, but that's providing no other issues need addressing.

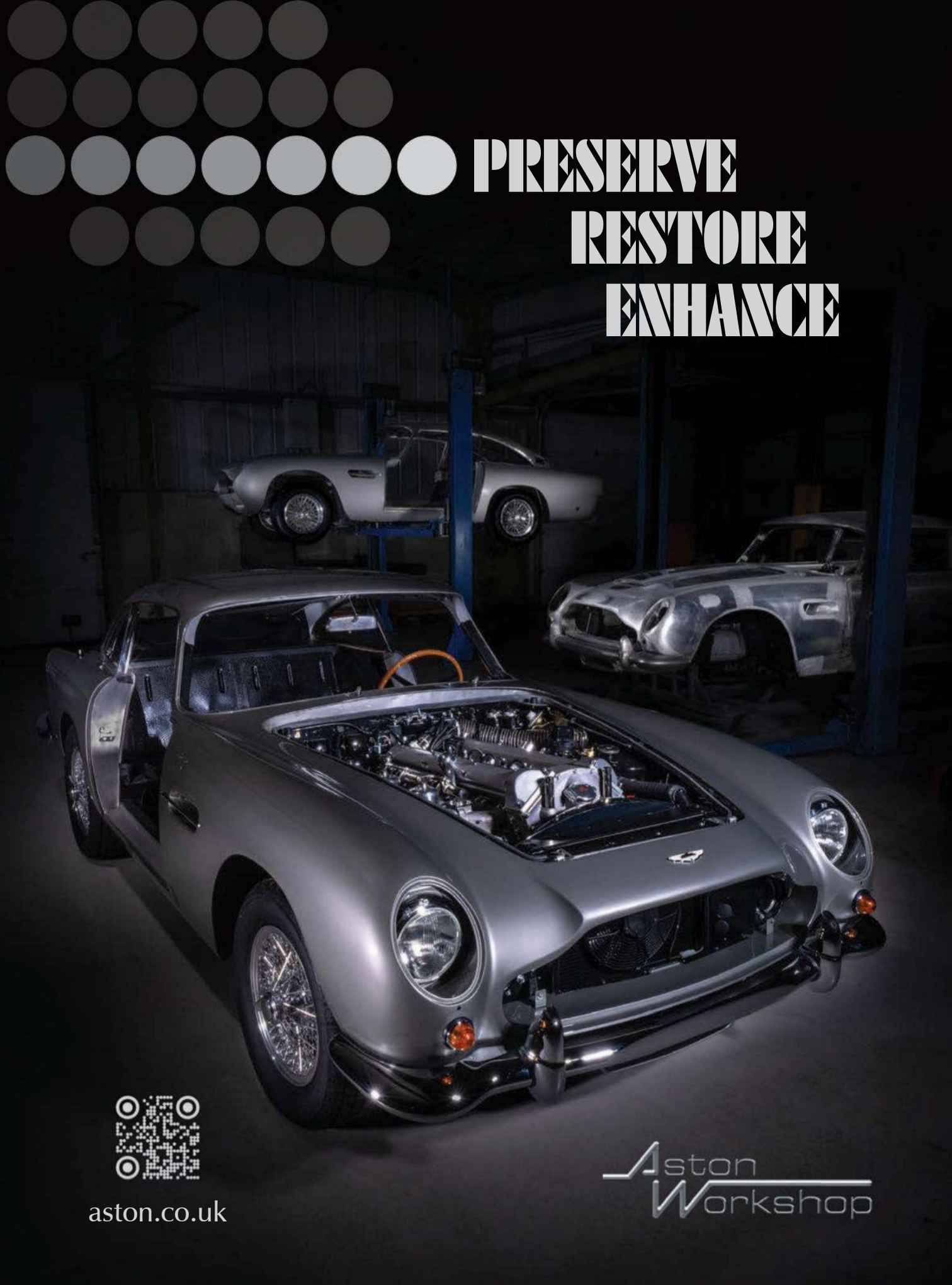
As an entry into the world of DBS ownership, a part-restored project is often an interesting starting point, providing you are happy with the standard of work that has been completed and you don't need to rectify any of it. There are a number of directions to take such a vehicle, ranging from a respray and sympathetic revival to retain its nostalgia to a full-blown strip and rebuild that could easily cost just as much as its current price tag. **AMD**

Other ideas for a DBS

One option for a DBS is to update it with Aston Workshop's Evolution 6.0 package. This includes taking a standard 5.3-litre V8 engine and increasing its capacity to 6 litres (AW have their own engine assembly department), then equipping it with four Vantage-specification 48 IDF Weber carburettors, resulting in a power output of around 380bhp (a standard V8 is around 320bhp). An optional X-Pack assortment of engine upgrades can take it further by increasing the compression ratio and fitting uprated camshafts to see 460-470bhp. Other options include electronic fuel injection and a modern six-speed automatic gearbox.

The Superleggera V8 is a new concept from Aston Workshop that hints at being the successor to the DB6, combining the charismatic V8 performance of the DBS from the Seventies and Eighties with bespoke handcrafted design to recall the beautiful Superleggera models of the Sixties.

Based on a genuine Aston Martin DBS or AMV8 donor car, the V8 Superleggera uses its underpinnings (steel chassis), but with numerous optional upgrades, including a 6-litre V8 with electronic fuel injection and a six-speed manual or automatic transmission.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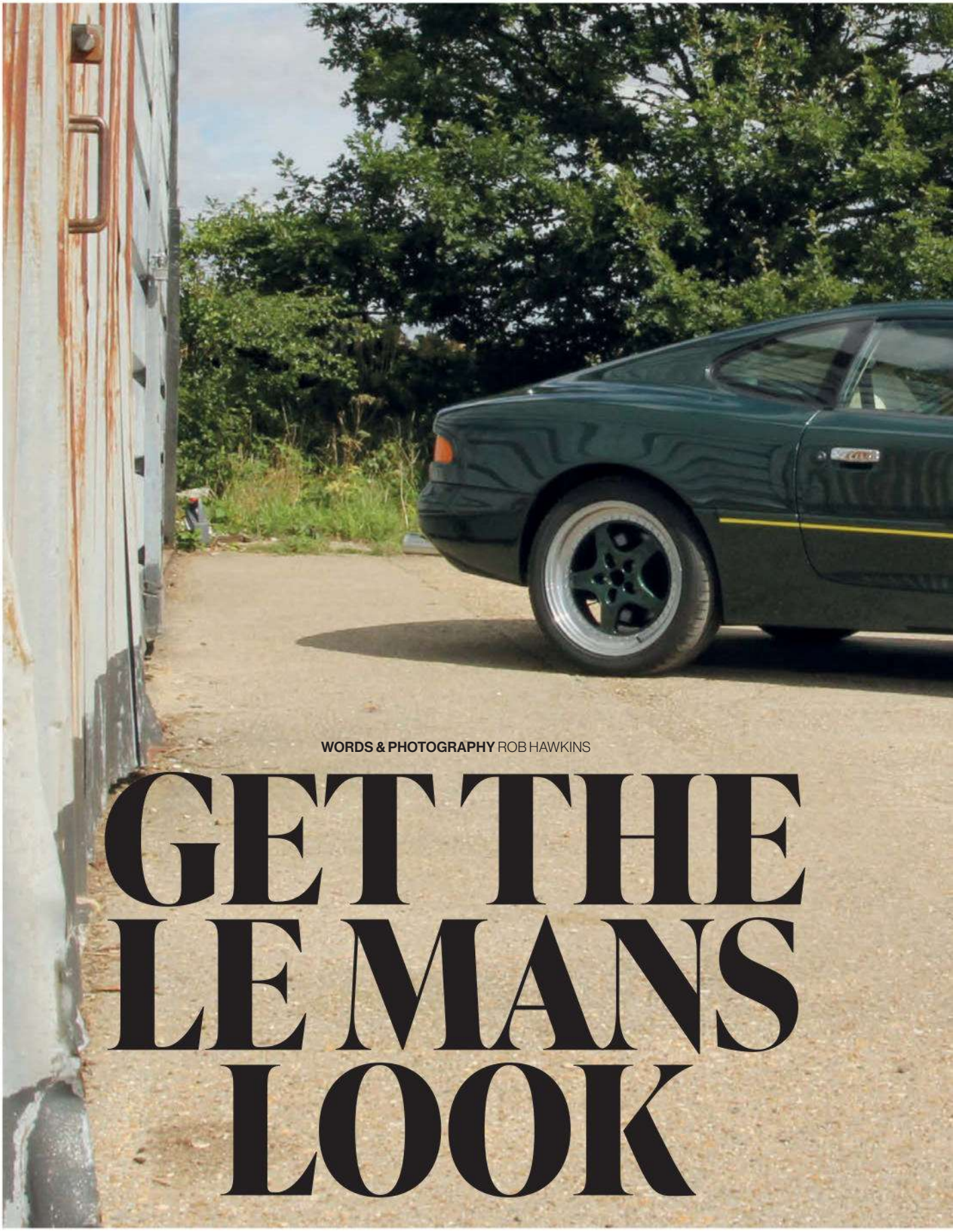

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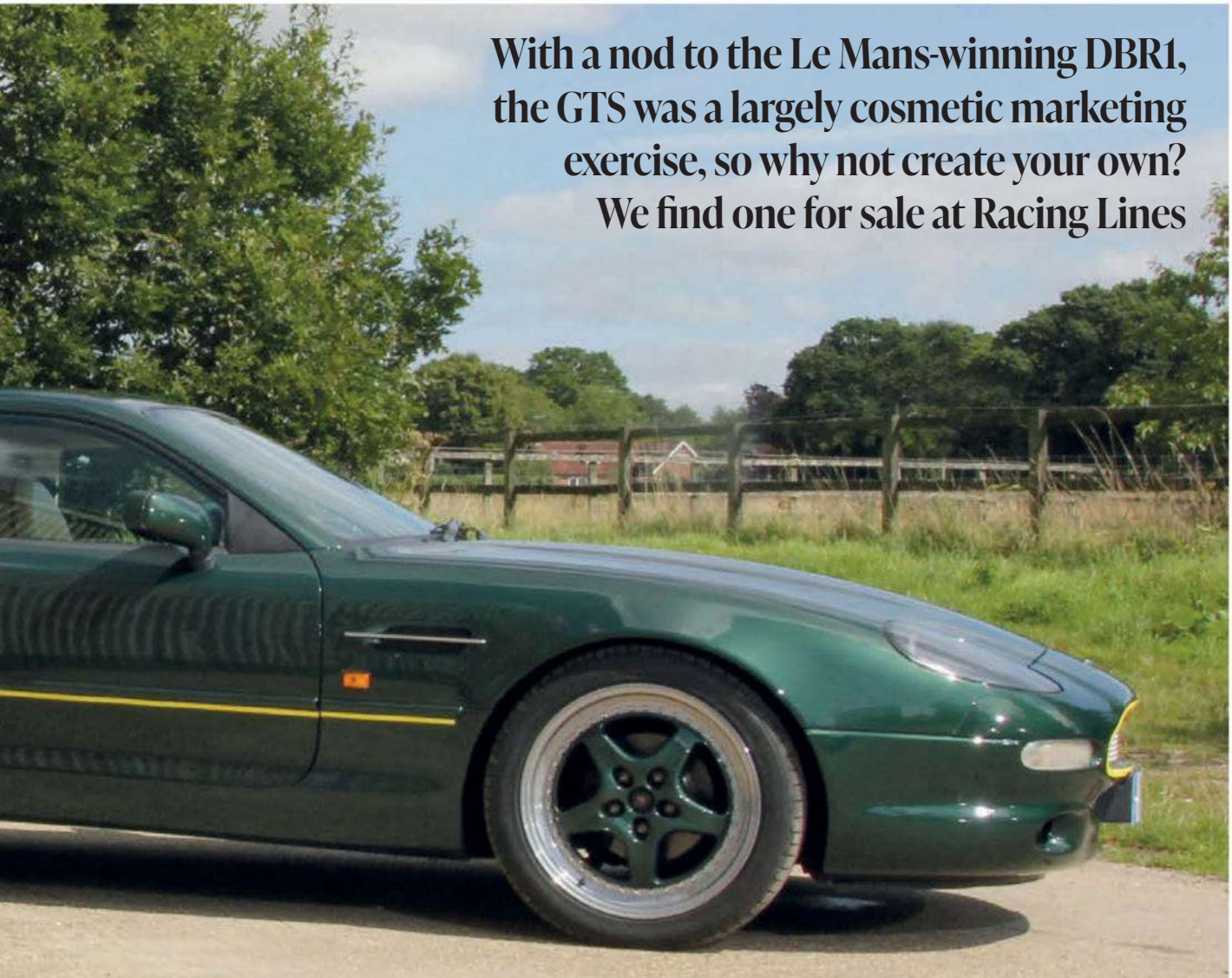


With a nod to the Le Mans-winning DBR1, the GTS was a largely cosmetic marketing exercise, so why not create your own? We find one for sale at Racing Lines

AT THE 1996 Goodwood Festival of Speed, a special edition of the DB7 was launched, which had been commissioned by Aston Martin Sales of Mayfair, but completed by Chiltern Aston Centre of Hertfordshire. Based on the six-cylinder model (the V12 was introduced three years later), it involved numerous cosmetic alterations and only one mechanical upgrade comprising a sports exhaust system.

That's not to say that those cosmetic alterations were superficial. In a nod to the Le Mans-winning DBR1, Aston Martin Racing Green exterior paintwork was complemented with yellow coachlines, along with a lick of yellow lipstick around a black Le Mans-style mesh front grille and a similar strip around the holes in the rear valance for the exhaust tail pipes. Twin Zagato-style bulges were added to the bonnet, which incorporated louvres for ventilation. The quarter light covers on the doors were painted to match the exterior paintwork, along with the scuttle panel trim. And there were the letters GTS etched into the chrome trim across the front wing vents.

At all four corners, Speedline Alessio split-rim alloy wheels were fitted with body-coloured centres, although Mistral alloys were an option.

Inside, there were white instrument dials with a GTS logo, a wood-rimmed steering wheel, additional wood veneers around the instruments, a Garrard Swiss analogue clock and yellow edging for the floor mats.

Marketed as the DB7 GTS, the Le Mans look wasn't solely reserved for new cars and just like many upgrades and packages that have been offered in the past, it was available for any model of DB7 old or new. And it is highly probable that some cars didn't receive the full list of alterations, or maybe different ones were added.

In 1998, the GTS upgrades were revised, and the GTS II was launched. This conversion continued to be available long after the DB7 finished production in 2004, and Chiltern Aston Centre has converted over 50 of them (i6 and later V12 models, coupe and Volante). The GTS II featured all of the

alterations of the first generation, but included round rear lights, as fitted to the DB7 Vantage, and GTS-monogrammed wheel centres and boot finishers.

Copied

Coco Chanel allegedly once said, "If you want to be original, be ready to be copied." And there are more such quotes, including leadership guru Robin Sharma, who said, "You know you're winning when you see you're being copied." So perhaps it stands to reason why we are looking at a re-creation of a DB7 GTS. After all, try finding a real one!

The re-creation seen here doesn't even attempt to claim to be the real thing, merely a good-looking DB7 i6 with some familiar styling. Independent Aston Martin specialist Racing Lines isn't trying to fake it and is openly honest that it's a loose styling exercise with only a few of the GTS features, such as the yellow lines, sports exhaust and Speedline Alessio split-rim alloy wheels.

Registered in March 1999, it's close by three months to the end of the i6 (it officially ended in June 1999) and was supplied by HWM with Buckinghamshire Green exterior paintwork. Inside, the Parchment leather upholstery has Forest Green piping and much more of that green across the dashboard, seat backs (fronts only) and in the carpets. The gear selector indicates there's an auto 'box, which in this case is a ZF four-speed.

Whilst HWM was responsible for all servicing of this car up until 2009, several vehicle specialists looked after it from then onwards, until it failed its MOT test in October 2021 on bodywork corrosion around the offside rear suspension mounting and the adjacent sill and up to the rear seatbelt anchorage point.

"The car was then assigned to Chicane [independent Aston Martin specialist], who undertook a full examination of it to determine what was required to not only obtain an MOT pass but also to return the car mechanically and cosmetically to the condition it should be in," explains Paul Brzezinski at Racing Lines.

Fresh MOT

During the first quarter of 2022, extensive work was carried out by Chicane and a variety of trusted specialists, and the car returned to the road with a fresh MOT in April 2022.

This work included replacing the front and rear suspension with new top mounts, steering track-rod ends, anti-roll bar links and rear radius arms. "The common issue of exhaust manifold cracks was addressed by fitting new exhaust manifolds and the supercharger belt was also replaced," says Paul. "At the rear the corrosion was addressed and new rear subframe V-mounts were fitted." These vee-shaped mounts consist of steel with rubber inserts. Once the rubber deteriorates, it can result in movement of the rear subframe and handling issues, so it's wise to inspect them and, if necessary, replace them.

To help reduce the risk of corrosion returning, the underside of the vehicle was rust-proofed using Noxudol, which is an underseal that has been extensively tested in Sweden. Unlike many other products, this one is solvent-free and is intended to be more environmentally friendly. Consequently, its drying time is much longer (up to a week).

The interior of this DB7 had largely survived. "The leather seats were in

excellent condition so they were just given a good clean and a moisturiser was applied," says Paul. "Only the driver's seat required some minor connolising to repair normal wear scuffs."

Typical of many a DB7, the Alcantara headlining had started to sag, so it was replaced with the same colour. This involves removing the entire headlining board, which is easier to do by removing the front seats to ease the large assembly out of the passenger door aperture.

Other interior jobs included checking the air-con system for leaks and then regassing it.

On the outside, the Speedline Alessio split-rim alloy wheels were fully stripped and rebuilt using all-new rim fixing screws. The centre caps were painted to match the Buckinghamshire Green paintwork. And finally, the wheels were shod with the correct Aston Martin-specification Bridgestone Potenza tyres.

Chicane recommended adding a few more GTS styling touches, especially considering this DB7 was also equipped

with a sports exhaust and a mesh front grille. "So the yellow pin striping was applied to the nose, sides and exhaust body cut-outs," explains Paul.

After passing another MOT test in 2023 with an advisory for corrosion in all of the coil springs (this could be as superficial as surface corrosion, which is to be expected), the car is now for sale.

At £14,995, had this DB7 been a genuine GTS, then we'd be looking at it with extreme suspicion. When these genuine examples of the special-edition DB7 appear for sale, they can easily demand a price tag that's double or treble this amount, depending on condition. For a standard DB7 at this price, it's slightly above average, which accounts for the corrosion repairs and protection along with the new suspension components – many of the common problems that can arise with these Astons.

Re-creation

It could be argued that this loose re-creation is nothing more than a DB7 i6 with a bit of paint and a set of aftermarket wheels. That's true in a sense, and there are probably other DB7s out there sporting a few styling cues from the GTS. After all, special-edition features have long been fitted to base models, whether it's a set of triple Weber carburettors or a distinctive front grille. "DB7s below £20k are great entry-level cars into Aston Martin ownership, but cars that have been well looked after and having that 'little bit extra' will stand out and get you noticed," says Rupert Keyzar at Racing Lines. "The original DB7 GTS really set the standard for this and although our car doesn't have the full complement of GTS upgrades, it has the most obvious ones, plus it sounds great. And it is those that people will see (and hear) when you pull into the 'Caffeine & Machine' car park for your Sunday roast. So, if different is your thing, then this 'cosmetic' DB7 GTS might well be for you."**AMD**

T51 WAN
DB7

SURVIVAL TACTICS

We discover how two V12 Vanquish owners are determined to keep their Astons in top condition

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY
ROB HAWKINS

MANUFACTURED BETWEEN 2001 and 2007, the first generation of the V12 Vanquish was a supercar in every respect, from its £157k price tag (for the entry-level model) to the 460-520bhp at the flywheel that could propel each car from stationary to 60mph in under five seconds and on to a top speed in excess of 190mph.

Only 2,588 of these hand-assembled Astons were sold, which were packed with the latest technology including a Tremec six-speed auto-shift manual gearbox and a bonded aluminium and carbon fibre chassis that was designed by Lotus. So what is it like to own, drive and look after one of these cars that is now around two decades old?
We meet two owners to find out the answers.

Owner profile: Chris Shrubb
Car: 2007 V12 Vanquish S
Owned since: 2020
Is this your first Aston Martin? In 2012 I acquired a 2010 DB9 coupe, then in 2018 I changed that for a DB9 coupe carbon edition and in 2020 I changed that for this V12 Vanquish S
Best bargain on your car: I bought a spare original bee-sting aerial for £5. I didn't need it but it was a bargain
Next job on your Vanquish S: Wrapping the headlights to minimise stone damage and refurbishing the wheels

The Vanquish S was introduced in September 2004 as the high-performance model. It used the same 5,935cc Ford-derived V12 engine, but with a power output of 520bhp instead of 460bhp. Upgrades from the optional Sports Dynamic Pack (SDP) were added as standard, including stronger, stiffer and shorter suspension springs to reduce the ride height by 5mm, along with revised dampers. A quicker steering rack made it 20 percent faster to turn from lock to lock. The front brake discs were changed from a diameter of 355mm to 378mm and equipped with six-pot calipers instead of four-pots with an extra 2mm thickness on the rear discs. And there were 11-spoke alloy wheels (standard wheels had 12 spokes).

On the roof, a bee-sting aerial is fitted at the rear, whereas the standard Vanquish should have one incorporated into the glass. Inside, the seat covers are all leather and include shoulder-height bolsters for the fronts.

Owner of the Vanquish S seen here, Chris Shrubb, has enlisted the expertise of David Such from Surrey-based V12Vanquish.com to look after his Aston. As we look around the car, with it raised on a ramp, David points out that a popular job is to replace the original fixing bolts for the front wheelarch liners and undertrays because they can corrode and become difficult to undo. He fits stainless steel bolts, but in keeping with originality, they are all painted black.

Looking underneath the V12 Vanquish S at all the flat undertrays that were fitted to help achieve a top speed of over 200mph, it's a work of art.

David remarks that despite all of this protection, he has found that the V12 engine rarely overheats. It also explains why the wheelarches felt so warm when we helped to manoeuvre the car on to David's ramp.

Inside the engine bay, there are more trim-related issues that David has addressed. What Aston Martin calls beautification panels (an attempt to conceal components in the engine bay), are fitted along the inner wings. These can perish and crack through heat cycles, so David now makes his own, which have been fitted to Chris's car. He has also replaced the rubber coolant hoses as they

had similarly started to deteriorate, along with the soundproofing material on the underside of the bonnet.

Brake fluid reservoir

Whilst deterioration of components within an engine bay is to be expected, David never thought he would be replacing the brake fluid reservoir, but not because of engine bay heat. Instead, he has discovered that sunlight can shine through the bonnet vent/mesh on to this plastic Jaguar-derived reservoir, resulting in ultraviolet light damage and the plastic turning brittle. If pressurised, such as fitting a one-man bleed kit, he has found the reservoir can crack and leak (or even explode), so he now recommends fitting a metal shield over the top of it to protect it

Chris has got to grips with gearchanges using the paddles mounted behind the steering wheel

from exposure to sunlight, of which he has fitted one to Chris's car.

This element of preventative maintenance is something that Chris is keen to pursue to help maintain his Aston and keep it in top condition. "In particular, I was interested in preventing the problems David sees on the cars he maintains," he says. "I asked him to future-proof my car."

That future-proofing involves fixing the typical problems that can arise, such as replacing the windscreen wiper arms that often corrode, the seals for the rear windows that often perish and the wheel centres that can deteriorate.

Some rust protection has been applied, but also the front and rear subframes were inspected as they can corrode (David can refurbish them).

All of the vital fluids were changed (engine oil, coolant, power steering and brake fluid), whereas the hydraulically operated auto-shift manual system was fully checked using AMDS (Aston Martin Dealer System) diagnostic equipment and the run time for a pump was found to be too slow. This resulted in slower gearchange times, which Chris noticed had improved once a new pump and accumulator had been fitted along with a fluid refresh.

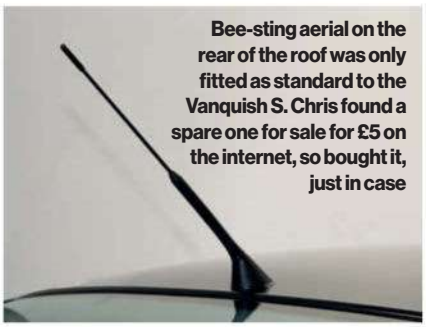
Future-proofing

The final element of future-proofing involved fitting a voltage spike protection kit, which helps to protect components, such as the ECU, if the vehicle battery is flat and the vehicle is consequently jump-started.

On the road, Chris clearly likes driving his V12 Vanquish S and is confident with operating the paddles to change gears, although he can switch to automatic mode if required. There's a knack to setting off and also to changing up and down the gearbox. The right amount of pressure on the accelerator pedal is crucial to achieving a seamless gearchange, and Chris has mastered it because at times, all I see is a change in the number displayed on the dashboard for gear selection. What I don't see is Chris backing off on the throttle pedal before he pulls on the right paddle to change up a gear. And pressing the Sport button on the dashboard speeds up those gearchanges.

When setting off in first gear, Chris allows a second or two to feel it has engaged before squeezing the throttle pedal a little further to get his Vanquish S moving. This seems to require a degree of mechanical sympathy, which is a little more than that required of a fully automatic gearbox, but it's essential to remember that this is no auto – it's a manual box with the added luxury of paddle shifts and no clutch pedal.

Metal cover over the top of the brake fluid reservoir protects the plastic from sunlight damage



Bee-sting aerial on the rear of the roof was only fitted as standard to the Vanquish S. Chris found a spare one for sale for £5 on the internet, so bought it, just in case

Typical ageing issues have resulted in the soundproofing on the underside of the bonnet being replaced, along with the plastic trim over the inner wings and the coolant hoses

The complexity of the auto-shift manual is further appreciated when Chris demonstrates downshifting. Should he want to shift down from sixth to third, it merely requires the left paddle to be pulled back three times. And if he selects a gear that is too low, the ASM will fortunately prevent engagement.

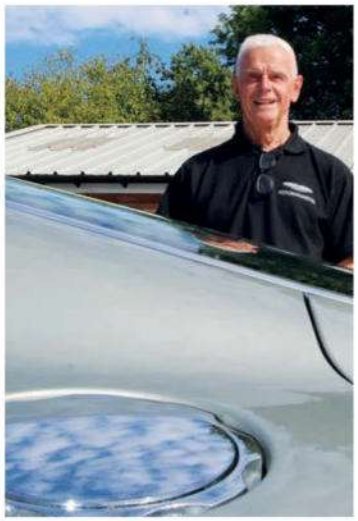
Despite the importance of some mechanical understanding of the gearchanges, Chris is also respectful of the V12 engine and how the car performs overall, but for very different reasons.

"It's a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde thing," he says. "At low revs and speeds, it purrs around sedately apart from that telltale exhaust note, but then drop a gear, increase the revs and it is transformed into a growling monster. But at all times the car feels like it is running on tracks. The engine easily outperforms me. I think it was Aston Martin themselves who coined the phrase 'brute in a suit' and it is exactly that."

Chris's Vanquish S model features full leather seating with additional shoulder-height bolsters

Fastening bolts for the wheelarch liners and undertrays can corrode, but David Such at V12Vanquish.com has plenty of stainless steel spares painted black

The V12 Vanquish S is equipped with 11-spoke alloy wheels



Owner profile: Kevin Hawney
Car: 2002 V12 Vanquish
Owned since: March 2019
Is this your first Aston Martin? No, I also own a DB7 and a 1972 Porsche 911 resto-mod modelled on the Carrera RSR that raced at Le Mans in 1976
Best bargain on your car: A trickle charger from Lidl supermarket which is essential for the Vanquish. They really don't like low battery levels in general and can be very difficult to gain entry to if the doors are locked, the windows are up, and the battery is flat
Next job on your Vanquish: Fit a new airbag clock spring

Kevin Hawney was reluctant to part with his DB7, but having seen and heard a Vanquish at Chalgrove Airfield on a visit with friends to Martin-Baker Aircraft Co Ltd (they make ejector seats), organised by David Such, he was equally tempted to own one of Aston Martin's hand-assembled supercars that shook the industry at the beginning of the current millennium.

So, he kept the DB7 and bought the early Vanquish seen here. And judging by its VIN, it is not only a relatively early model (its build finished in December 2001 and was first registered in January 2002), but it is the one before the run of Bond cars. By sheer coincidence, the VIN on David Such's V12 Vanquish indicates it's the one immediately after the Bond cars.

Keen to be hands-on with his Vanquish, Kevin has completed some of the routine maintenance jobs, such as replacing the engine oil and filter, differential oil, refreshing the ASM fluid, changing the air filters and upgrading the ASM relay.

"I have QuickJacks in my garage which are perfect for maintenance," he says. "I bought them specifically sized for the Vanquish." These hydraulically operated jacks enable the vehicle to be raised by roughly 18-24in and are equipped with mechanical lock-outs.

Security module

When Kevin discovered he had to get progressively closer to the boot to be able to unlock the car with the fob, he diagnosed the problem as being with the security module and changed it. "In the process, I discovered that the bracket retaining the boot strut was almost sheared through so removed it and welded a repair."

Some preventative work has been completed by Kevin, which sounds rather involved, as he recalls, "I removed the oxygen sensors to check by camera the integrity of the catalytic converters adjacent to the engine." Fortunately, the

condition of the cats was satisfactory, but their inners can become damaged if a coil pack or spark plug fails, resulting in unburnt fuel entering.

Other preventative work was in the interest of avoiding corrosion. "I fitted aluminium rear wheelarch liner retaining brackets to prevent electrolytic corrosion since the originals are made of steel while the tub is aluminium," he explains. These brackets are supplied by David Such, are made from 3mm pressed aluminium and finished in an anodised black coating.

Kevin is clearly keen to work on his car and whilst talking to him, he explained that he plans to replace the 12 spark plugs

Kevin Hawney confidently operates the paddles behind the steering wheel to change up and down the Tremec manual gearbox of his Vanquish

when it's necessary, appreciating that it would be wise to replace the coil packs at the same time. And if he gets stuck, he knows that David Such can help him out and supply any parts he needs. He has also turned to the internet for help, finding that AstonOwners.com proves useful for diagnosing and is a fantastic resource for all things Aston, especially Vanquish.

"There is a very vibrant WhatsApp group, known as Vanquish Torque, now numbering more than 60 members and includes several with extensive knowledge of the Vanquish model," he says. "Any request for help is usually answered within the hour by someone that has either dealt with the issue previously, knows how to deal with it or knows someone else who can. Often, suggestions for replacement parts that are originally Ford or Jaguar are mentioned as being available through alternative suppliers."

Le Mans

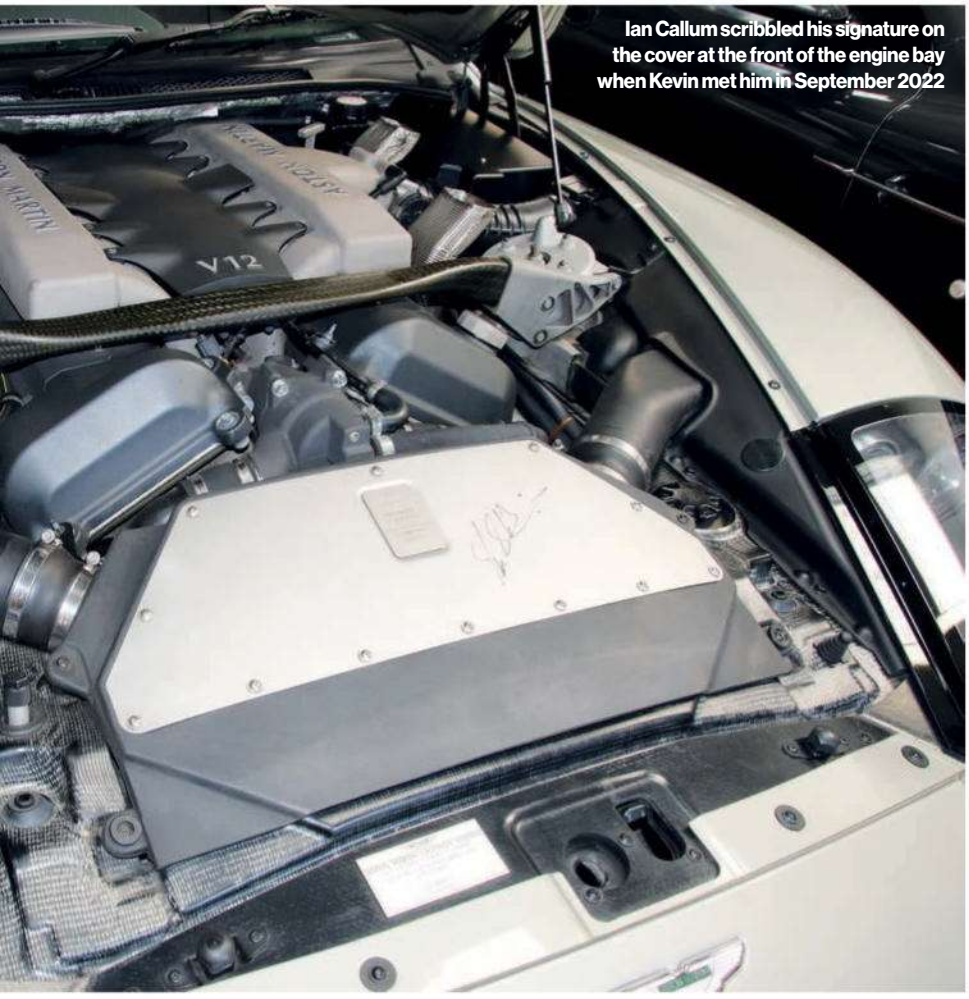
With less than 23k on the clock, Kevin does drive his Vanquish and has been to France, stopping over at the Hôtel de France near Le Mans, which is where the Aston Martin race team stayed during their win in 1959. "This was a tour with friends in the week before the Centenary of Le Mans race with a drive round some of the circuit and a visit to the museum showing many winning cars."

On tour in the Peak District

The WhatsApp group arranges mini tours, which usually last between one and three days, visiting the likes of North Wales, Lincolnshire, North York Moors, Rutland and the Peak District.

In September 2022, Kevin arranged a visit for the Vanquish group to the Callum Designs near Warwick. "Hosted by Ian himself, the group were given a tour of the entire workspace from design studio to workshop including sight of the impressive Callum 25 Vanquish bespoke project," says Kevin. "My car was signed

Spotless leather-clad interior has survived intact after 22 years and almost 23,000 miles of use



Ian Callum scribbled his signature on the cover at the front of the engine bay when Kevin met him in September 2022

by Ian Callum. A very special touch. On completion of the tour, the group including Ian retired to Caffeine & Machine for lunch. A special day for any Vanquisher!"

Kevin's DB7 is a straight-six with an auto gearbox and therefore a complete contrast to his Vanquish, but he says he really enjoys driving both. "Contrast the sound of the Eaton M90 supercharger of the 3.2-litre DB7 winding up with the almost instant acceleration of the 5.9-litre V12. The Vanquish benefits from huge power and a manual gearbox that is a delight to drive. Some say that the gearchange on the Vanquish is not smooth, but that will only be true for those that have not had the patience to learn how to use the paddle shift correctly with a momentary lift-off from the accelerator on each gearchange. Reverse is engaged via a lift of both paddles into neutral and a press of the Reverse button on the dashboard. Once mastered the Vanquish is a real driver's car and difficult to surpass."

That's quite a statement considering Kevin owns a 340bhp Porsche weighing in at 950kg, which after our meeting was competing at the Shere Hill Climb in Surrey. "While it is clear that these two cars are chalk and cheese," he says, "Vanquish is the first choice for luxury touring with fast open roads, particularly over the North York Moors or in Europe." **AMD**

19in 12-spoke alloy wheels are fitted as standard on the Vanquish

TRANSMISSION TECHNOLOGY

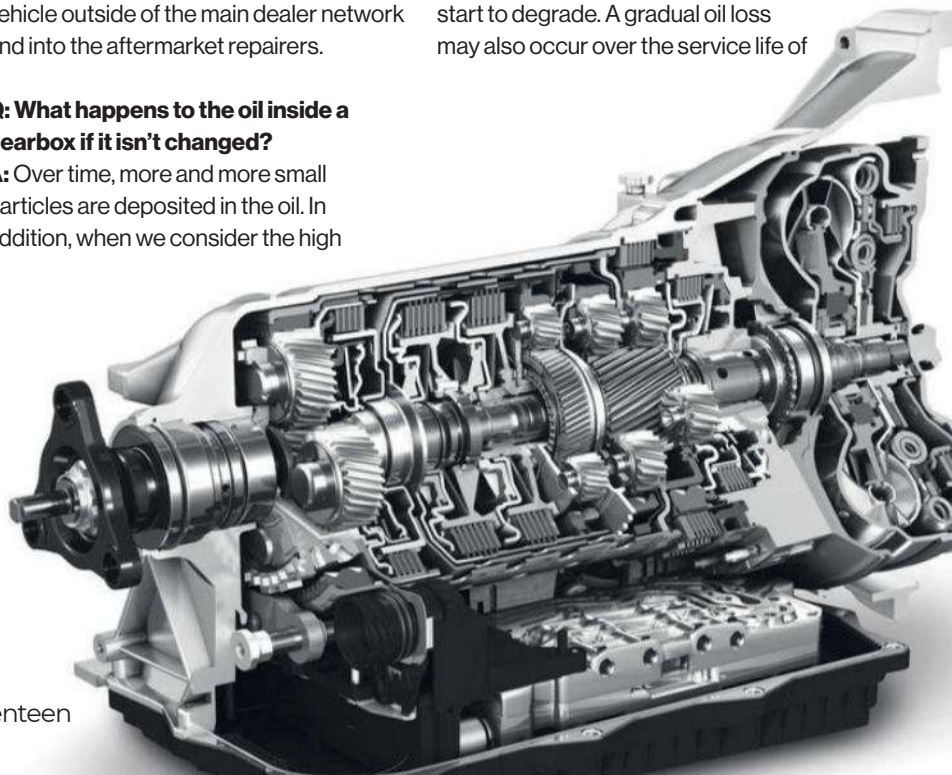
Q&A

Aston Martin has a long-standing history with ZF, so we asked them to explain all concerning servicing and common problems

Q: Many of the ZF automatic gearboxes found in Aston Martins are supposedly filled for life, so the oil inside them shouldn't need to be changed along with the filter, but is that wise, especially on an older vehicle?
A: ZF automatic transmissions are always filled with service life oil (not filled for life). However, due to the many influencing variables on the service life of transmissions in individual vehicles, ZF recommends an oil change after a maximum of 150,000km or eight years at the latest for its 6HP and 8HP transmissions.

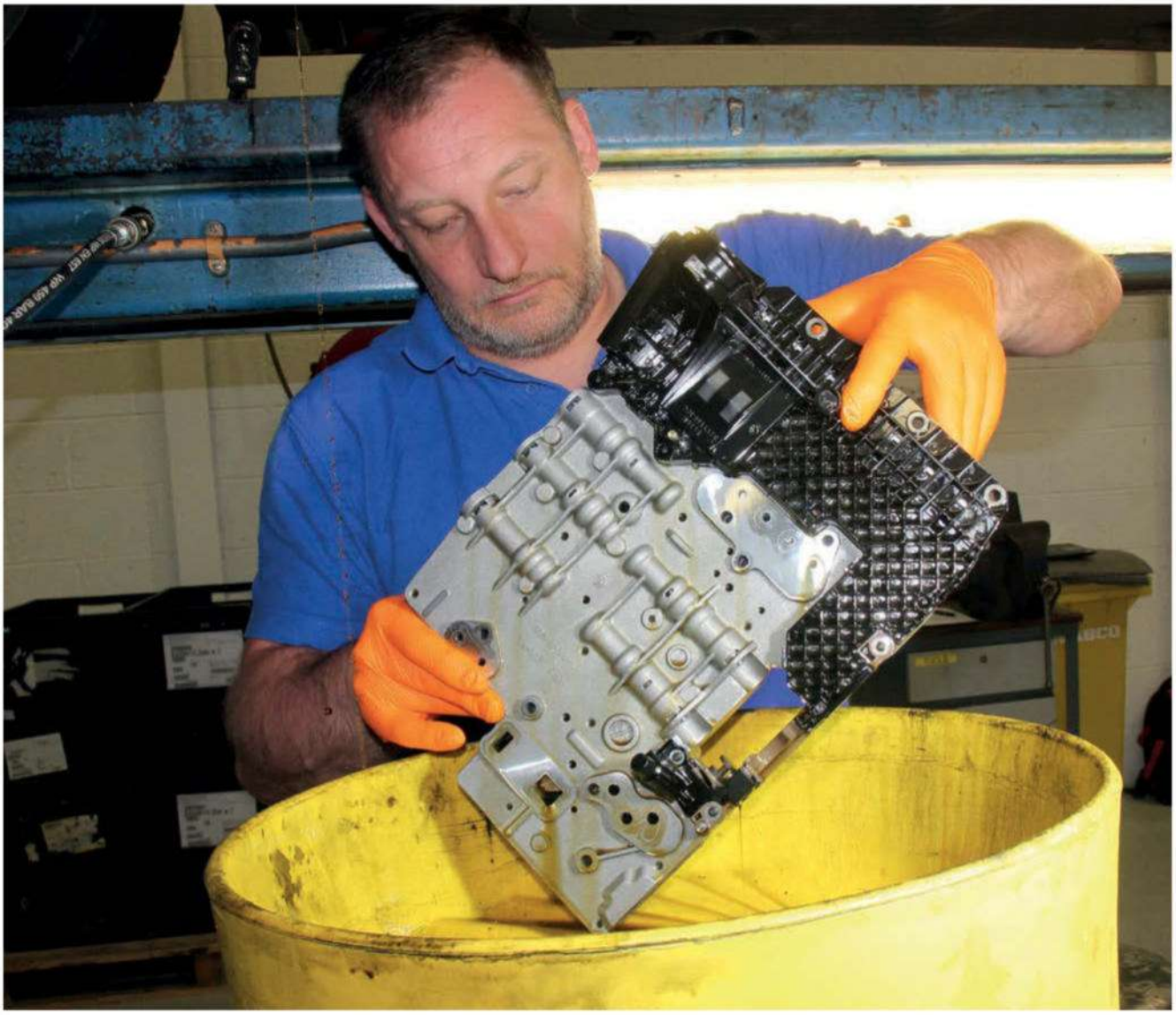
Q: So, was it a mistake to recommend not servicing your gearboxes?
A: Unfortunately, we can only advise the vehicle manufacturers on a recommended service schedule for our transmissions. It is up to them to suggest to the end user when they consider the transmission should be serviced. Given that the first service is required at a maximum of eight years or 150,000km, this, in the majority of cases, takes the vehicle outside of the main dealer network and into the aftermarket repairers.

Q: What happens to the oil inside a gearbox if it isn't changed?
A: Over time, more and more small particles are deposited in the oil. In addition, when we consider the high mileages commonly seen on older vehicles, the transmission oil's chemical characteristics and performance does start to degrade. A gradual oil loss may also occur over the service life of

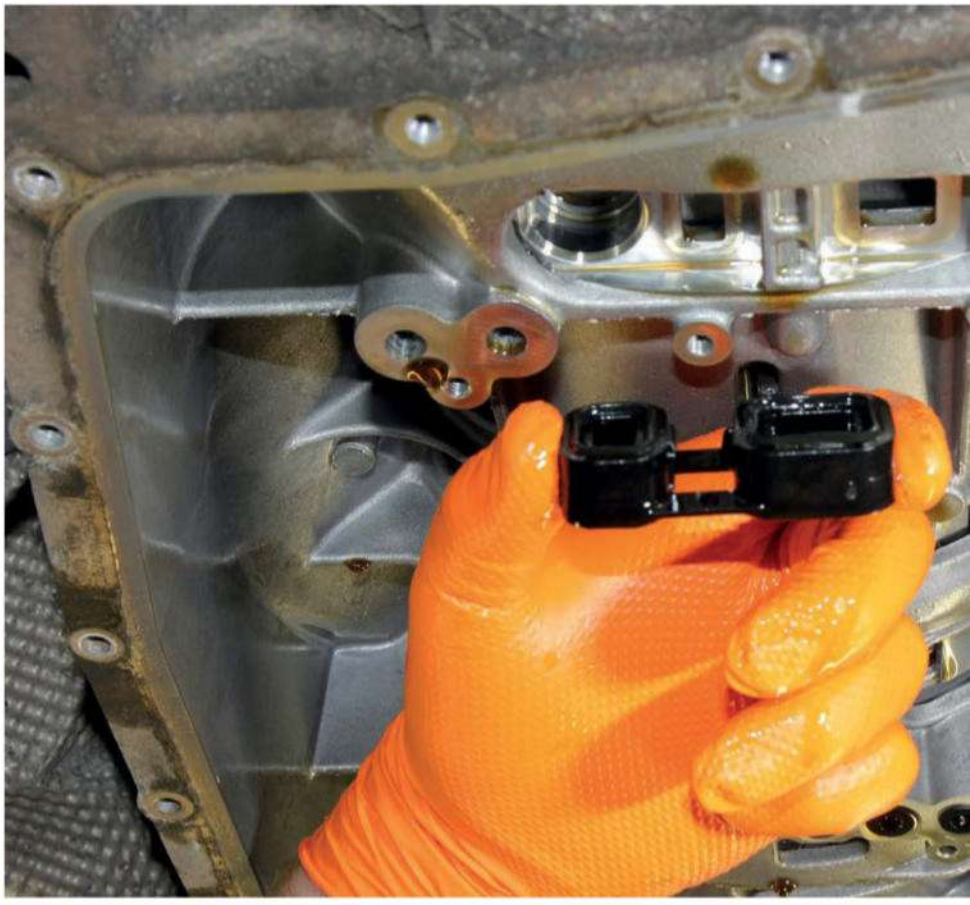


the transmission. If lubrication in the transmission is no longer guaranteed, the consequences are high wear and overheating.

Q: Should automatic transmission fluid (ATF) be used in, for example, the Touchtronic III ZF eight-speed automatic transmission in the Vanquish S from 2016 onwards?
A: Absolutely not! Dexron 3- or 4-type ATF will cause damage. The chemical composition of Dexron-type fluid will cause the friction materials in the clutches and brakes to detach from the steels causing slip and contamination. All eight-speeds would need to be filled with Lifeguard 8, or equivalent information on oil for ZF transmissions can be found on our online document TE-ML-11.



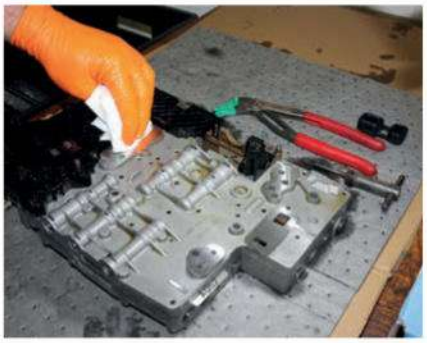
Q: If a gearbox has never been serviced and the engine has a high mileage, is it worthwhile running a flush first before adding fresh oil?
A: If the gearbox is flushed to remove heavy particulate deposits, more problems can arise. This is because in some instances those particle deposits are effectively taking up the increased clearances between components as the transmission wears. Take them away and the internal wear and tear suddenly becomes an issue, resulting in slipping and poor selection. Flushing can also disturb heavy deposits that have collected in the webbing of the casing and, if not removed, end up in your new oil and filter causing a reduction in oil flow and decreased pressures.

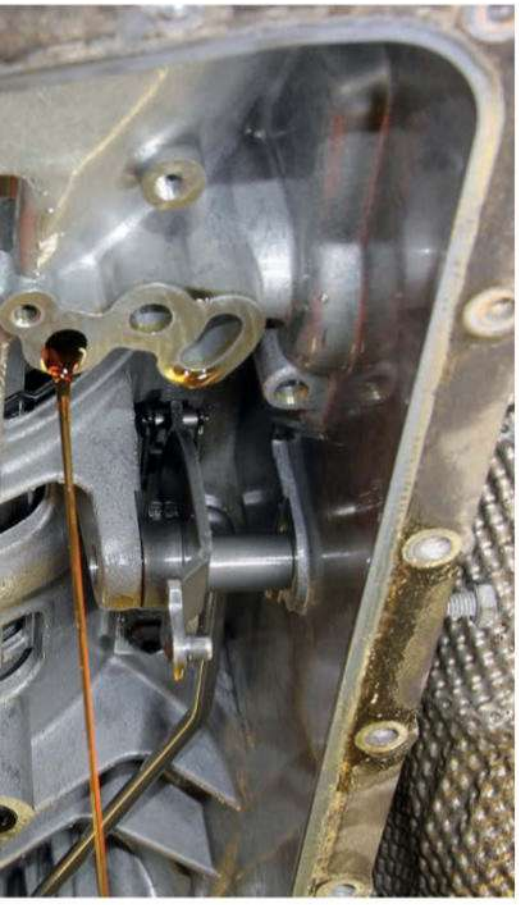


Q: Can you supply parts for the five-speed manual gearbox fitted to the DB6 (1965-1970)?
A: Through ZF Tradition, we have the support available for the older-generation transmissions fitted to classic models and even some of the very early ZF manual transmissions are supported. While we

strive to support our legacy transmissions for as long as possible, we do not always have 100 percent of the older-generation parts available.

Q: Automatic gearboxes seem like a dark art, with talk of a transmission control unit (TCU), valve block, mech assembly and solenoids. Is it really that complicated?
A: Working on automatic transmissions can seem like a dark art! But when you understand the fundamentals, they are really not that complex mechanically. The clever bit is the control of the pressurised oil used to engage or disengage the clutches and brakes. From a servicing point of view, most competent mechanics are more than capable of carrying out a routine service or removing a mechatronic unit. The really important step in this is cleanliness and observing ESD (electrostatic discharge) protection when opening an automatic transmission and handling the mechatronic unit.





Q: What exactly is a mech assembly?
A: The mech or mechatronic is the integrated hydraulic valve body and TCU assembly.

This is the unit that houses the solenoids and internal valves/pistons used to control the flow of oil to the individual clutches and brake pistons.

Q: And is a transmission control unit (TCU) similar to an engine control unit (ECU)? If so, can it be communicated with using diagnostic equipment?
A: The transmission control unit is very similar to the engine control unit. Using CAN or FlexRay (depending on the generation of the transmission), the TCU monitors the operation of the transmission and is also responsible for the safe gear selection depending on the conditions the vehicle is being driven in. The TCU takes data input from several other control modules on the vehicle, the main one being the ECM for engine operational data. It also communicates with other control modules such as ABS/ESP, steering angle sensors, yaw and longitudinal G-sensors.

This information forms part of the active monitoring that will influence how the transmission shifts when being driven. Most of this data including error codes can be viewed using a suitable diagnostic tool by selecting transmission or TCU from the relevant menu, once communication has been established.

Q: Are there any common oil leaks to be aware of on your automatic gearboxes?
A: Oil leaks can be a problem on older transmissions. This is usually due to sealing surfaces not being thoroughly cleaned or degreased before installation of new components, such as the sump or TCU harness guide tube.

Q: We've heard that software updates can often fix gearchange problems. How is this so when the gearbox was once working fine, but suddenly it isn't?
A: Mechanical faults can be temporarily masked by a software change, but it will not fix a fault that is due to excessive wear or a mechanical failure. Manufacturers frequently change software or update it to provide better shift characteristics or other minor changes relating to transmission operation.

Q: What happens if the oil level is too low in an automatic gearbox?
A: This can result in the engine over-revving or having no power flow in corners or when starting from a standstill. There may be transmission valve chatter due to air pockets in the oil and general malfunctions including error codes being generated. Cavitation of the pump vanes may occur, causing increased wear, oil foaming, low pressures and burning of the oil and clutches.

Q: And what about too much oil inside an automatic gearbox? Can it create problems?
A: Yes, too much oil in the gearbox risks increasing the transmission temperature at high road speeds. Oil loss can occur via the breather, and excessive case pressures can cause seals to fail, resulting in more oil loss. Foam can form in the oil due to splashing of the excess oil. This foaming can lead to shifting problems due to fluctuations in oil pressure leading to increased slip and the clutches overheating and burning the oil and friction material.

SEALEY
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RING

TESTING CORDLESS TYRE INFLATORS

WORDS ROB HAWKINS

A TYRE inflator is an essential piece of equipment in helping to maintain tyre pressures, and a cordless one has got to be at the top of the list for versatility. Powered by a rechargeable battery, some use the same battery as a group of power tools, whereas others have an inbuilt battery.

We've been testing nine cordless tyre inflators, each powered by an assortment of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that range from 3.7V to 20V (it's also important to consider a battery's amp-hours rating).

All of the ones we have tested measure a tyre's pressure, which is displayed on a digital readout. They include an auto-inflate function, which means a target pressure for a tyre can be set then, in most cases, the inflator can be left to pump air into the tyre, stopping automatically once that pressure has been reached.

Important points to consider when choosing a cordless tyre inflator concern the speed of inflation, so we measured the time it took for each one to inflate a tyre from 25psi to 30psi.

To be able to perform this test accurately, we took a calibrated digital tyre pressure gauge and used it as a benchmark, which not only helped with the inflation test but also with determining the accuracy of each tyre inflator's reading. We were alarmed by some of the results – see the data table for more details. Some of the cordless tyre inflators we have tested include lots of additional features, such as adaptors to inflate a football or different valves (not just the standard Schrader car tyre type), a torch and powerbank.

We reckon that cordless tyre inflators fall into two categories, based on their size and where you intend to store them. Should you need to carry a tyre inflator in your vehicle, then it generally needs to be compact, whereas if it can be left in a garage or at home, then size isn't so important.

That may mean a compromise on speed of inflation for a compact tyre inflator that can squeeze into a glovebox.

Model	Connector & hose length	V and Ah	Actual reading at 25 & 30psi	Time 25-30psi (secs)
Clarke 12V cordless digital tyre inflator	Screw thread 25cm	12V 2Ah	25.3/30	115
Sealey 12V jump starter and tyre inflator	Quick release 45cm	12V 12Ah	23/31.2	67
Draper 12V cordless air compressor	Screw thread 15cm	12V 1.5Ah	25/30.6	77
Sealey compact rechargeable tyre inflator	Screw thread 14cm	11.1V 2Ah	25/29.6	86
Draper jump starter & tyre inflator	Quick release 45cm	12V 12Ah	25/29.9	35
Ring cordless digital tyre inflator and air pump	Screw thread 69cm	11.1V 4Ah	25/31.3	47
Sealey SV20 series cordless tyre inflator	Quick release 50cm	20V 2-6Ah	21/26	34
Draper 20V air inflator	Screw thread 15cm	20V 3Ah	24/28	40
Ring cordless rechargeable tyre inflator	Screw thread 65cm	7.4V 5Ah	24.8/30.4	69

CLARKE 12V CORDLESS DIGITAL TYRE INFLATOR

7/10

PRICE: £59.98 **PART NUMBER:** 000111301
FROM: Machine Mart **TEL:** 0115 956 5555
WEB: www.machinemart.co.uk **WARRANTY:** 1 year
WEIGHT: 980g
CONNECTOR TYPE: Screw thread
HOSE LENGTH: 25cm
CHARGING: Dedicated mains power lead
SPARES: N/A
EXTRA FEATURES: LED light when inflating, powerbank, 12V car adaptor
PLUS POINTS: Lightweight, useful powerbank, 12V in-car adapter if battery is flat, accurate readings
DISADVANTAGES: Slow inflation time, fiddly controls, auto-inflate only works if set above 30psi, dedicated charge lead

SEALEY 12V JUMP STARTER AND TYRE INFLATOR

7/10

PRICE: £109.90 **PART NUMBER:** RS1200TI
FROM: Sealey **TEL**: 01284 757500
WEB: www.sealey.co.uk **WARRANTY: 1** year
WEIGHT: 950g
CONNECTOR TYPE: Quick release
HOSE LENGTH: 45cm
CHARGING: USB-C
SPARES: Hose (part number RS1200TI-03) for £7.79
EXTRA FEATURES: LED, SOS, powerbank, 12V vehicle jump starter
PLUS POINTS: Compact equipment that can jump-start an engine with a flat battery, quick-release hose, useful powerbank and torch, spare hose is cheap
DISADVANTAGES: Pressure readings not so accurate but close, confusing controls, no instant pressure reading displayed

DRAPER 12V CORDLESS AIR COMPRESSOR

8/10

PRICE: £52 **PART NUMBER:** 24239
FROM: Draper Tools **TEL:** 023 8049 4333
WEB: www.drapertools.com **WARRANTY:** 1 year
WEIGHT: 825g
CONNECTOR TYPE: Screw thread
HOSE LENGTH: 15cm
CHARGING: Dedicated mains lead
SPARES: Hose (part number 18406) £2.40
EXTRA FEATURES: LED, SOS, 12V car adapter, cloth storage bag
PLUS POINTS: Compact and light, useful 12V in-car adaptor back-up, storage bag, accurate pressure readings, cheap replacement hose
DISADVANTAGES: Dedicated charge lead, no battery status, short hose, auto-inflate is confusing (needs a second press of the trigger afterwards)

SEALEY COMPACT RECHARGEABLE TYRE INFLATOR

PRICE: £54.99 **PART NUMBER:** CTI120
FROM: Sealey **TEL:** 01284 757500
WEB: www.sealey.co.uk **WARRANTY:** 1 year
WEIGHT: 450g
CONNECTOR TYPE: Screw thread
HOSE LENGTH: 14cm
CHARGING: Micro-USB
SPARES: Hose (£3.35) and various adaptors
EXTRA FEATURES: LED, SOS, powerbank
PLUS POINTS: Small and lightweight, includes a powerbank, cheap spare hose, accurate readings, simple to use
DISADVANTAGES: Short hose, not quick at inflating, battery status unclear

9/10

DRAPER JUMP STARTER & TYRE INFLATOR

PRICE: £107.99 **PART NUMBER:** 23722
FROM: Draper Tools **TEL:** 023 8049 4333
WEB: www.drapertools.com **WARRANTY:** 1 year
WEIGHT: 1,100g
CONNECTOR TYPE: Quick release
HOSE LENGTH: 45cm **CHARGING:** USB-C
SPARES: Contact Draper
EXTRA FEATURES: Jump starter, LED and SOS, powerbank, storage case
PLUS POINTS: Second-fastest inflation time, accurate pressure readings, quick-release connector, useful carrycase makes it ideal for storing in a vehicle
DISADVANTAGES: Pressure reading isn't instantly displayed (target pressure needs to be set first) and psi is only in whole numbers

8/10

RING CORDLESS DIGITAL TYRE INFLATOR AND AIR PUMP

PRICE: £79.99 **PART NUMBER:** RTC600
FROM: Ring Automotive **TEL:** 0113 213 7333
WEB: https://shop.ringautomotive.com
WARRANTY: 1 year
WEIGHT: 1,500g **CONNECTOR TYPE:** Screw thread
HOSE LENGTH: 69cm
CHARGING: Dedicated mains lead
SPARES: Contact Ring Automotive
EXTRA FEATURES: LED, airbed attachments, powerbank, soft bag
PLUS POINTS: Quiet, simple controls and display, long hose, fast inflation time
DISADVANTAGES: Airbed features are hopeless, quite bulky so not ideal for storing inside a vehicle, dedicated charge lead

9/10

7/10

SEALEY SV20 SERIES CORDLESS TYRE INFLATOR

PRICE: £34.10 (body only) **PART NUMBER:** CP20VAP
FROM: Sealey **TEL:** 01284 757500
WEB: www.sealey.co.uk **WARRANTY:** 1 year
WEIGHT: 1,500g **CONNECTOR TYPE:** Quick release
HOSE LENGTH: 50cm **CHARGING:** Dedicated battery charger
SPARES: SV20 battery (from £40), battery charger (from £20), hose (£8.75) and several other parts
EXTRA FEATURES: N/A
PLUS POINTS: The fastest inflation time, long quick release hose, affordable and available spares, simple controls
DISADVANTAGES: The most inaccurate pressure readings, expensive if you need to buy a battery and charger, heavy, auto-inflate requires the trigger to be permanently pressed

DRAPER 20V AIR INFLATOR

PRICE: £35.80 (bare body only) **PART NUMBER:** 55767
FROM: Draper Tools **TEL:** 023 8049 4333
WEB: www.drapertools.com
WARRANTY: 3 years (register online with Draper)
WEIGHT: 1,350g **CONNECTOR TYPE:** Screw thread
HOSE LENGTH: 15cm
CHARGING: Mains-powered Draper D20 battery charger
SPARES: D20 12V 3Ah Li-ion battery (00649) £36; 20V Li-ion charger (97914) £15; hose (97367) £5.76
EXTRA FEATURES: N/A
PLUS POINTS: Cheap if you already have a D20 battery and charger, cheap spares, fast inflation time, long warranty
DISADVANTAGES: Moderately accurate pressure readings, symbols on buttons difficult to see, short hose with awkward attachment

7/10

8/10

RING CORDLESS RECHARGEABLE TYRE INFLATOR

PRICE: £59.99 **PART NUMBER:** RTC4000
FROM: Ring Automotive **TEL:** 0113 213 7333
WEB: https://shop.ringautomotive.com **WARRANTY:** 1 year
WEIGHT: 750g
CONNECTOR TYPE: Screw thread
HOSE LENGTH: 65cm
CHARGING: USB-C or 12V car adapter
SPARES: Contact Ring Automotive
EXTRA FEATURES: LED, carrycase/bag
PLUS POINTS: Compact, long hose, accurate pressure readings, useful memory functions, easy controls, can be powered by 12V car adaptor
DISADVANTAGES: Hose is fiddly to store on the back of the body

DIFFERENTIAL DETAIL

We ask Salisbury diff specialist Ben Thomson of Simply Performance to explain what's fitted to classic Aston Martins, how they work and the common problems that can arise

Q: What differentials do you cater for when it comes to Aston Martins?
A: We specialise in the Salisbury 4HA and 4HU.

Q: What's the difference between a 4HA and 4HU?
A: A 4HA is a beam axle. Typically, this is on the older cars such as the Aston DB4/5/6. The 4HU is a differential for an independent rear suspension, such as on the DBS, AMV8 and DB7.

Q: So, you don't work on modern electronic differentials?
A: No.

Q: In brief, how exactly does a differential such as a Salisbury 4HA work?
A: It converts the drive from the gearbox/propshaft to the wheels. This transmits the power at a 90-degree angle. It uses a mix of gears and shafts, the main one being a hypoid gear for the crown wheel and pinion (CWP). Arguably a differential is just as important as a gearbox.

Q: What exactly is the pinion?
A: This is one of the main gears inside, which rotates at the speed of the propshaft.

Q: What's a crown wheel?
A: This is the largest gear in the differential. It's matched to the pinion and together these gears convert the drive from the propshaft to the wheels.

Q: What is an open differential?
A: This is referring to the carrier inside the differential, which is a more basic non-locking type of differential carrier. It can be referred to as a free differential. This means you generally will only get your drive/traction through one wheel.

Q: What exactly is a limited slip diff and how does it work on a Salisbury axle?
A: This is the other factory option other than an open carrier. This is an LSD carrier. An LSD has clutches inside which have resistance that we call pre-load between each wheel. The pre-load puts drive through both wheels. This pre-load can vary, and a high pre-load is not always a good thing!

Q: What's a ramped LSD?
A: This is a mechanism inside the LSD that applies more pre-load/resistance as more torque is applied through the unit. It is often also called a power lok or pozi locker (US). These units bite/squeeze the clutch plates on acceleration to give you more locking/resistance. And in the Aston world they were available from nearly the start of the 4HA in the Fifties all the way until the mid-Nineties. One of the last 4HU differentials Aston used was in the DB7. At the start of production these used the same ramped LSD as the earlier 4HUs and 4HAs. However, that quickly changed and a non-ramped LSD was introduced. These units solely rely on the pre-load from the clutches. They have no locking mechanism in them. Due to the nature of their design, they are extremely basic and offer very little advantage over an open unit.

Q: Are the main problems that arise with differentials centred around oil leaks and worn teeth?
A: To be honest there is no main issue. Oil leaks are always a problem, especially on early differentials/axles. We still see units coming in with leather seals! Leaks are even more problematic for cars with inboard brakes. Oil leaking on to your brake pads is far from ideal.

It's not a common issue to find worn teeth. The crown wheel and pinion (CWP) are generally very strong, and we always have our best success from original gearsets. All that said, general neglect and age can cause issues. Leaks and CWP wear can also be linked. A 4HU typically holds 1.8 litres of oil and if a bit leaks out, it doesn't take much to then start causing issues. A large part of that is cooling the gearset and bearings. If your oil level is too low, the oil will be hotter, causing more wear or sometimes just no lubrication to the gearset. It can be hard to see wear on gearsets, but over the years we have got a good grasp of it.

▲ A clean 4HA axle ready to be built

Finished race build with a nice pattern

An outer carrier bearing race with several signs of wear and damage

Q: Is it straightforward to strip and rebuild a differential?
A: In short, it's not rocket science for a straight rebuild. In reality, it can be a lot harder. I always admire people who want to give it a go. If it's a straight rebuild, people will often change all the bearings and seals as like for like, i.e. swap all the bearings and keep the original shimming. It can be challenging if you don't have the right tools, but also problematic if you are not measuring or checking pre-loads and backlash.

There are multiple issues with this route. The main ones being that often the bearings are not exactly the same as the ones from the Sixties/Seventies. Of course, they are close, but we would argue there are some slight changes even though we only use original Timkens. Alongside this, often these units were not built 100% correctly in the day. You

Cracked clutch plates

Differential built with a helical automatic torque biasing (ATB) unit

A differential with what looks like sticky toffee inside

An LSD carrier where the pinion nut has come loose and the pinion has eaten the LSD carrier

Broken LSD cross shafts are a common occurrence

have to remember these were built in the tens of thousands. Our estimates put the quantity of 4H units in excess of 500,000, but that could be a lot higher. And these were produced across decades. So just swapping the bearings without measuring backlash and pre-loads can be risky. What doesn't help matters is the lack of information on how to build these and we would argue most of the information out there is not always 100% right.

A large element of any diff building is being able to spot a problem with parts. This is not just a tooth missing from a crown wheel, which would be very obvious and rare. This is checking for wear on gears, which could be fine lines on teeth and wear tracks on old bearings for something not running true in a casing. Causes of problematic diffs can even be burrs/dents on bearing seats and parts that are not running true. There are many checks that we do to build a great diff and the complexity of a rebuild can escalate quickly when swapping gearsets or diagnosing/adjusting LSD faults. All of which we handle day in and out.

Q: What are helical gears?

A: Helical gears are a type of gear that are known to be fitted in helical LSD units. These are commonly known as Quaife units, and are quite different to the original LSD units fitted in Salisbury differentials but offer a similar concept. For the Salisbury range these are not that useful because there were so many factory-installed LSD units. For some cars, where there were not factory LSD options, these have a larger benefit.

Some people would argue that helical diffs are useful on road cars because they are quiet and have no maintainers. The gears are cut in a helical shape (like a helical staircase, although most people incorrectly call this a spiral staircase). Helical diffs are classed as torque-sensing gears. If one driven road wheel lifts or hits gravel, it will spin the wheel with the least traction. However, they will try and apply power to both wheels equally until that point, so it helps with pulling away quickly and getting the power down out of a corner, unlike a standard open diff that will only generally drive one wheel at a time. The advantages of a helical diff are

that it's maintenance-free, long-lasting, stronger than a standard diff and ideal for a performance road car.

Q: What is bearing pre-load and why is it important?
A: Bearing pre-load is the force required to turn a bearing. A bearing without any pre-load by design turns effortlessly in its race. The Salisbury differentials require quite a lot of pre-load on the bearings as standard.

We often refer to the bearings and their pairs as cassettes. You have a few different bearings in a diff – pinion, carrier and output shafts. They all have pre-load independently meaning the pre-load of the pinion bearings doesn't affect the pre-load of the carrier or outputs.

These cassettes all have different settings. This is mainly due to the size of the bearing and its role. The pinion pre-load being the most critical, but you could argue they are all important.
One of the biggest questions we get asked after a rebuild is, "My diff is too stiff to turn by hand, is it seized?" And the answer to that is of course, no, but that all these cassettes have pre-load. When you are turning the diff, you are turning these together so it's all the pre-load added up. It can take a lot of force but after 100 miles, they generally will free-off.

The challenge with a diff, as it's a sealed unit, is that any pre-loads on bearings are fixed. Unlike a wheel bearing where you might want to nip it up for an MOT because it's got too much end float, on a diff you can't do that. If you loosen your pre-load, it will often lead to premature diff failure.

Q: What is the rotational force of the pinion and why does it need to be measured?
A: It's a bit of a secret recipe. It's measured in inch-pounds as it's a sensitive measurement. It's really very important to get this right. Too tight and the bearings will overheat and too loose and the pinion might move. Any pinion movement is disastrous for the CWP as it means the gears have been running out of mesh. This can cause wear and damage to both the crown wheel and pinion. It can be harder to see but is more commonly seen on the coast side of the teeth. As the pinion is pulled back in on deceleration, it causes the teeth to run at different positions.

Q: What is backlash in the teeth of the CWP and what happens if it's too much or too little?
A: This is the measured gap between the pinion and the crown wheel teeth. If it's too tight, then as the gears warm up, they can start to lock up and too much means the gears are not meshing correctly.
This being a hypoid gear, the teeth are sliding on each other not just pushing so it's very important that there is good mesh/contact across the whole tooth. A diff with too much backlash is probably only running on two edges of the teeth.

Q: What are the common misconceptions you've found for understanding differentials?
A: Their importance in a car and sensitivity. Not all old units can be rebuilt because of wear, general age, rust and bad-quality builds. Either bad luck when built originally or bad machining when they were made, or rebuilt previously to a bad standard, means that not all units can be rebuilt.

We typically don't offer an exchange service as standard for that exact reason. The condition and quality can vary a lot.

Q: My differential has been rebuilt a few times before and is still noisy. Why?
A: Trying to find the source of a noisy differential is challenging. Typically, when someone calls or asks me about rebuilding their differential, the first question I ask is what's wrong with yours? This is important because it's our job to fix whatever problem is in these units and diagnose the issue, or the problem parts can often be the hardest.

That question also has another reason and that is to see if we can be sure that the differential is the main problem. Often it can be noises in a car that people are trying to fix, and these can be incredibly hard to find. And in some cases, it is not the differential at all.

One of my bigger worries when taking on a rebuild of a supposedly noisy diff is that we open it up and can't find any issues. Ideally, the best situation for us and the customer is that we find a bad bearing, one that has failed because they will be replaced as part of the rebuild.

4HA axle with cracked bracketry

This output shaft housing is damaged because the bearings have been spinning inside the casing

This outer pinion front bearing has visibly damaged roller bearings

The teeth on this pinion are damaged, so it's rendered scrap

A pinion missing several teeth

A pinion inner tail bearing with very worn and damaged rollers

A pinion flange with a damaged seal track

Q: I've taken the back off my diff and it looks okay. Does it need a rebuild?
A: Sadly, there is very little to see with the back cover removed. You can check the backlash and the condition of the teeth on the crown wheel but other than that there is not much else you can check. To get a good assessment of the overall condition, it requires stripping down. Then you can see the condition of the outer cups on the bearings. To go to the next step, you can cut the cage holding the rollers to see what the internal races look like. It's not necessary to do this, but often the inner races do more work than the outers.

At this point, with the diff stripped, it makes a good argument for replacement, we certainly don't like and rarely use any used bearings. So sadly, with the rear cover removed, there is very little to see. Of course, if there is a problem with the differential, you might see some debris and magnetic drain plugs are always helpful to sift out debris before it causes more issues.

Q: What oil should I use for my differential?
A: The original oil for most of these units was EP90 and any LSD differential had an additive you would add in. These days, the oils have the additives built into them. You can buy oil suitable for LSD differentials, which you can also use in open/non-LSD differentials. In principle, any GL5 hypoid gear oil would be suitable but we advise Castrol. They keep changing the name but it's currently called Transmax Limited Slip Z 85W-90 or for racing, Transmax Limited Slip LL 75W-140.

Q: What's the difference between pre-load and end float?
A: Pre-load is the tension required to turn something and end float is the amount of movement within the bearing. Both are very different concepts and measured in different ways. Both are critical to get right as some axles have a mix of bearings set up with pre-load and end float.

Q: Is LSD pre-load adjustable?
A: In short, it can be adjusted and changed. You can do this either through different orientations, the clutch plates or machining. We can set the static pre-loads quite accurately within reason. There is always a bit of drop-off after the diff leaves us. Although we do our best to minimise this as much as possible.

We generally try and keep pre-loads low. Nearly all LSD units are ramped and, if healthy, will lock under torque so high static pre-loads can cause all kinds of issues in road cars and it's usually not necessary.

Q: Is there a difference between road and race diffs?
A: In terms of the way we build the diffs, generally no, but it's always good to know the intended applications. Trying to ensure longevity through the use of the strongest parts is important and the decision to upgrade to some heavy duty components will depend on weight, tyres, torque/power and driver ability.

Q: How difficult is it just changing the ratio?
A: This is a lot more advanced compared to a straight rebuild. Where most people might get away with just installing new bearings, with ratio swaps you have to start the shimming from scratch. It doesn't help that there are different offset carriers and four different pinion bearings. It's something we do every day, and it can be quite complicated.

Q: What about sending you a complete differential from outside the UK? Can you overhaul and return it without the risk of getting caught up in import/export duties?
A: If you are able to package the differential or axle on a suitable pallet, we are able to get the unit collected. We can do this from anywhere in the world. Providing we are able to book through our courier accounts, we are able to import without incurring additional costs like taxes. If you are not able to find a suitable pallet, we can supply one if required. This is something we have done before. AMD

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By Matt James
Editor,
Motorsport News

Aston Martin ready to get back to the front in Formula 1

The 2024 season has been a struggle for the grand prix team, but it is all part of the growing pains says Motorsport News's Matt James

THE COLLECTION of silverware garnered by the Aston Martin Formula 1 team in 2024 is a nice round number: it is precisely zero. That has been a shock to the system for the Lawrence Stroll-owned team.

Maybe the reason it is such a disappointment was in the context of Aston Martin's over-achievement in 2023. Rewind 12 months, and the British-based cars were among the fastest on the grid. Star driver Fernando Alonso had been through a purple patch at the start of the season with six podium finishes from the first eight races – and he came within a whisker of Aston Martin's first ever win in grand prix racing at Monaco.

Although 2023 tailed off slightly, Aston's final position in the constructors' battle, where it finished in fifth spot, marked the team's best to that point. There was a positive feeling around the entire concern.

When the wraps came off the AMR24, the fresh challenger for this year, there was a humble message coming from the boffins behind the design. At the time, Dan Fallows, the technical director, said, "The majority of the parts have changed on it, but it is still really essentially a strong evolution of last year's car. We have kind-of built on the end of [2023] AMR23. We've seen the in-season development race is absolutely fierce and we want to be as competitive in that as we have been going into the new season.

"That's what we've been really focused on – to make sure that we've got a good, stable basis for us to go and develop the car, to keep those updates coming and keep the performance coming."

It is very easy for each team's pre-season talk-up to be full of optimism because no squad has been beaten until the opening race of the campaign has been run and the stopwatches are pressed into service in anger.

When this year's campaign kicked off in Bahrain at the start of March, it was quickly clear that the plans for evolution on the AMR24 had come off the rails. Points for Alonso and teammate Lance Stroll in the Middle East opener were welcome but both drivers were more than a minute behind the winning Red Bull of Max ▶

The majority of the parts have changed on it, but it is still really essentially a strong evolution of last year's car.

Verstappen. It was very different to the 2023 picture.

Those were ominous signs and while the skill of Alonso kept the Green Machine in the points for the first six races in a row – including what would be a season's best of fifth place in Saudi Arabia in March – the chassis was a much less competitive proposition compared to the AMR23.

What was also a blow was that it quickly became clear that rival teams had jumped up the pecking order while Aston had slipped back. A resurgent McLaren was in Red Bull's slipstream at the head of the pack, while Ferrari had a competitive machine too and the factory Mercedes team was inconsistent but getting quicker. If all of those cars performed to their maximum at any given race in 2024 and were reliable, then Alonso and Stroll were scrapping around for the minor points at best.

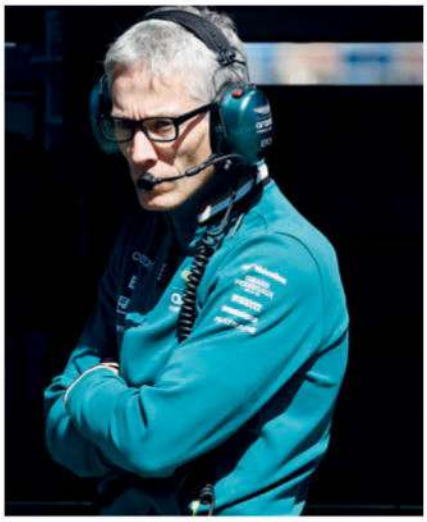
By the time of the seventh round of the year and when the F1 teams had returned from a demanding opening run of long-haul flyaway races, changes were on the way. At Imola in May, Aston Martin technical bosses had reworked the chassis and introduced a new front wing, floor and bodywork to help cure what the drivers were reporting was inconsistent handling.

One of the major issues was with the balance of the car on circuits with longer radius corners, typically the faster tracks like Silverstone in Britain and Spa in Belgium.

Rather than resolve the issues, the upgrades made the Mercedes-powered Aston Martins even harder to drive. As the supposed improvements were brought in, the team's performance director Tom McCullough said, "We've [had] some balance characteristics that made the car a little bit harder to set up and drive, but I think most people are battling those. It's always a compromise."

There were more tweaks in time for Silverstone in July with a revamped front wing to improve the grip levels. Again, it was a development cul-de-sac.

This struggle created a knock-on effect on the performance of the car over the longer stints during a grand prix too. Because the aerodynamic grip was not as prevalent as the previous campaign, the drivers were relying more on the mechanical grip generated by the suspension and its set-up rather than the wings. As they did that, it meant that the drivers chewed through their Pirelli tyres and were often left slipping and sliding over the closing stages of races. This was particularly painful as tyre conservation – so vital in F1 – was something that had been a strong suit in 2023.



Aston Martin team principal Mike Krack

Former technical director Dan Fallows

There was another upgrade for Hungary in the middle of July, and yet again it failed to unlock the pace from the chassis.

It is understandable that the frustrations crept in. Two-time world beater Alonso, who has been a cheerleader for the team for so long, said after the Italian Grand Prix at Monza in September (where he finished a distant 11th) that things were bleak. "We have to remain patient and accept that we are no longer competing with the top four teams," said the Spaniard. "At the same time, we should not end up behind teams like Williams and RB."

The feeling of confusion about a technical direction was never more evident than it was at the Brazilian Grand Prix in Sao Paulo in early November, where the floor of the car that had first been tried at Suzuka in Japan in April was bolted back on to try and extract performance. Even that didn't work. It produced a nervous rear-end on the AMR24 and both drivers skated off the circuit in the tricky damp conditions which was, in effect, a snapshot of the entire season.

The major concern for Aston Martin was that its in-season development, the area that had been identified by Fallows at the launch of the car, had failed to spark. It was what heralded Aston's slide away from the sharp end of the grid towards the end of 2023, and it was even more alarming in 2024. This is an area which desperately needs fixing for 2025. The work on developing a chassis after it has been launched is something which most of the top teams undertake with vigour and success and it is a path which Aston

Saudi Arabia where Alonso finished fifth

Adrian Newey will join AM in the spring of 2025

Martin needs to get on top of. After the false development dawns of 2024, the remainder of the campaign was one to simply endure while all concerned looked ahead to better times in the future. There is much cause to look ahead and even the hard yards at the end of this year have had their own value when it comes to progress.

Aston Martin team principal Mike Krack explained that the Silverstone-based operation continued to push to find answers to the stumbling pace of the AMR24, where many might have written off the season and purely looked ahead.

Krack explained, "We needed to be realistic, considering the gaps to the front and the gaps behind. We [didn't give] up on 2024, but 2025 will soon come into focus. Work on [the 2024 car was] very important though because it's this that gives us direction for next year. There's a lot of carry-over with stable regulations, and whatever we learn now, we take into 2025."

The groundwork done on the less-than-competitive chassis over the course of the latter part of the year was important and that feeling was ramped up late in the summer when it was announced that Aston Martin had captured the signature of ace designer Adrian Newey.

The greatest engineer in grand prix history had departed the sport's recent dominators Red Bull and joined Aston for a fresh challenge, and the fizz of excitement was palpable.

But this also puts the pressure on. Aston simply can't have such a lacklustre season again as Newey prepares the path for his first full Aston Martin design in 2026, when the rules will be substantially revised.

Newey will join in the spring of 2025, which means that he will not have time to have any input on next year's car. Krack says just having multiple world championship-winning brainbox Newey in the building will turn up the spotlight of every technical department within the squad's flashy Silverstone HQ.

"I think we should use 2025 as an opportunity to show Adrian what we can do. I think that should serve as a motivation for all of us," said the Luxembourger. "We are not where we want to be. Our target was clearly to close the gap to the top four teams.

"At the beginning of the season, we knew that we were around the fifth-fastest at the time, and the target was to close that gap.

"We have not managed that. Others have more caught up than we have closed. So that is the reality and that is something we have to understand and address."

That understanding and the desire to prove to Newey that he has made the correct choice by opting to join Aston Martin will be a key motivator for 2025 to put the programme back on track. AMD

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FROM THE CLUBHOUSE

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN: COTSWOLDS TOUR

Seven Aston Martins, seven couples and a grand plan to tour the magnificent Cotswolds

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY GARY PARKIN

THE IDEA of a Cotswold Car Tour came about because my wife Mel and I had visited the area many times, so know some of the best places to go and thought it would make a good tour destination.

The first thing was to see if there was enough interest from Area 14 members. We initially had nine couples interested which ended up being seven couples, who became known as 'The Magnificent Seven'.

Mel and I had stayed at a place just outside Tetbury on several occasions which we thought was ideal as there was safe car parking and good accommodation. Once that was all booked, the next thing was organising visits to the various attractions we had in mind.

As some members were also going to the Aston Martin event at Gaydon and others were travelling or busy elsewhere, a Sunday lunchtime rendezvous was arranged. Mel and I have been visiting the Cotswold Barn on the road between Broadway and Stow-on-the-Wold for a few years as our first point of call for lunch when visiting the Cotswolds. The views are amazing, the food is great, and the staff are friendly, plus it has a separate parking area for 'Petrol Heads, Super and Classic Cars' and therefore seemed a good central meeting point for us all and then a nice drive on to our hotel after lunch. For the Monday, we thought a drive out ending up at Broadway village would be nice, but we were just missing a lunch stop. However, one of the couples suggested The Fleece Inn at Bretforton near Broadway, so this filled the day nicely. Mel and I know Julian who runs the Man Cave, and we arranged a visit to his shop, a must-see for car enthusiasts.

The Classic Motor Hub at Bibury

Parking area at the Cotswold Barn

Five Zeros supercar showroom with Derek's Vanquish

On the Tuesday we went to The Classic Motor Hub at Bibury which we know quite well, so this was always on the list. Additionally, we thought the Five Zeros, Supercar Barn was also an interesting place to visit – a destination idea from reading the Aston Martin Owners Club's Quarterly magazine as well as other publications.

Wednesday was our last day and some of the group decided to visit Highgrove while others went to Girardo & Co near Ascott.

The Fleece Inn, Bretforton

Here's what some of the Magnificent Seven had to say about the tour:

Day 1 – Peter & Sandra – 2024 DB12 Volante

Shortly after 9am on Sunday 1 September three of the couples and their Vantage, Vanquish and DB12 met to begin their Area 14 journey to the Cotswolds and the lunchtime rendezvous with the rest of the exclusive group of seven cars.

The trip was meticulously planned by Gary and Mel to the extent that our cross-country trip to the Cotswolds Barn incredibly avoided roads with potholes on our side!

Day 2 – Brian & Jane – 1998 DB7 Volante

On day two, the morning was a little hazy (bit like some of the crew) but promised to brighten up later. Breakfast was boisterous, with excellent food and service.

Lunch was at The Fleece Inn – a National Trust property Grade 1 listed pub in a small village. Next stop was Broadway village after another enjoyable drive through the rolling hills and woods. Gary led us into the Man Cave and we were all made most welcome and greeted with a small gift bag and free refreshments. The Man Cave is everything automotive, old petrol signs, one-off special models and pictures, clothes etc.

All back safely and then to the bar for a pre-dinner drink and chat before another excellent meal with much laughter and conversation.

Day 3 – Derek & Sara – 2016 Vanquish

After another hearty breakfast the Magnificent Seven became the Super 6 as Brian & Jane had to head off home.

The rest of us headed off to Five Zeros at Bradford on Avon. On arrival we were ushered into one of their storage buildings to join other vehicles on display. Part of this facility provided an American-style diner, an ideal setting to look at the cars while consuming our sandwiches. On display were a good selection of Astons from early Vantages and DB9s right up to a DB12 Volante for sale at a modest £250k!

Day 4 – Gary & Mel – 2006 4.3 V8 Vantage

All too soon it was time to make our way home. It was an enjoyable few days away with great friends that seemed to go all too quickly. All the cars behaved impeccably and seemed to thrive by being used every day. **AMD**

Girardo's Ferrari showroom

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ASTON MARTIN V12 VANQUISH

2003, 39044 miles, £59,000. In Die Another Day specification- low mileage, collector's car recently retrimmed in black nappa leather with Aston Martin logo embossed on seat- stunning. Please call 07432608704, Scotland.

124092

ASTON MARTIN V8

1974, 73192 miles, £85,000. Series 3 Aston Martin AMV8 auto., in very good condition and in present ownership since 1998. The 5340 cc V8 aspirated engine (4-twin-choke Weber carburettors) has been converted to unleaded fuel and has matching original chassis (VIN) and engine numbers. Bodywork: Fixed-head coupe in smoke silver (champagne), repainted by previous owner from original brown. Interior: light tan leather and carpets with beige headliner, black dash and central console. Please call 07964241122, South East.

124218

ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE

2006, 32000 miles, £26,495,00. Manual finished in Tungsten Grey Metallic with a great service history. This car has just had a massive overhaul with 1000s and 1000s spent. Long ownership from previous keeper and now needs a new home. Probably the most desirable paint finish and great being the manual transmission. Ebony black leather heated electric seats, front and rear sensors adaptive exhaust system. We offer great rates of finance and welcome any part exchange. If you would like more information on this car please call Rob on 07730979259, East of England.

ASTON MARTIN DB9 VOLANTE

2005, £28,950. The car here was first registered August 2005. With just three previous owners this car has full service history mostly with Aston main agents and work including coil pack replacement and all the usual attendings. With just 45000 miles the car is supplied from us with full service and ready for the summer. Please call 01993 849610, South East.

ASTON MARTIN DB7

2003, 58,999 miles, £29,995. First registered May 2003 (03) in Jersey this excellent Aston Martin DB9 Vantage Volante has a modest 59,000 miles recorded from new. And with the Jersey speed limit set at 40 mph this car will have enjoyed a gentle life thus far. Finished in Solent Silver with Navy Blue Hood and Magnolia Hide Seat Fronts and Bottom Roll, Navy Blue Seat Backs, Top Roll and Carpet plus Burr Walnut Veneers, all very classy! The DB7 Vantage has over 400 bhp on tap; 0-60 mph is achieved in a touch over 5 seconds. Super car performance figures in its day and still plenty fast enough. Please call 01798 874477, South East. (T)

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE 550 TWIN SUPERCHARGED

1996, £179,500. Here we have for sale a 1996 Vantage 550 with just 17000 miles with 3 previous owners. Finished in the ultimate colour combination of Aston Racing Green with beige trim, this car has been maintained at works Service with no expense spared and as you would expect has a huge history file to boot! Presented in 'as new' condition. A superb example of just 280 cars produced. Please call 01993 849610, South East.

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ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE

2006, £29,995. First registered January 2006 (55 Reg) this Aston Martin V8 Vantage has just nudged 40,000 miles recorded. Finished in Tungsten Silver with Iron Ore leather. This example presents very well and its condition is totally commensurate with its low recorded mileage; head-turning looks, serious performance and a glorious V8 soundtrack. Launched in 2005, the all-new Vantage featured a 4.3-litre, quad-cam, 380bhp Jaguar derived V8 enabling 0-62mph in five seconds on its way to a top speed of 175mph. Supplied with its original handbook/service booklet showing nine stamps, all by Main Dealers including the pre-delivery inspection at 48 miles on 18/01/2006. We will include an inspection and the 10th service. A new battery was fitted prior to a fresh MOT which is valid until August 2025. Please call 01798 874 477, South East.

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2010, 361 miles, £89,999. Built to European specification. Special 'Elwood Blue' livery. Numerous extra-cost options. Offered from an extensive private collection. Recently recommissioned by Stratton Motor Company. Built to European specifications, this car boasts numerous special features in addition to the generous inventory of standard equipment. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

123619

ASTON MARTIN DBS

1970, £115,000. Finished in Cumberland grey with original black leather trim and carpets, this DBS can only be described as a very, very original spec car. Although the car has a huge history file where through out the 1980's was serviced and maintained by the Aston Martin factory service department. In later years the car has been stored and used sparingly, covering just 4000 miles in the last fifteen years. A very nostalgic and original driving car with its automatic Borg Warner gearbox. In addition, included in the price of this car is the very unique registration number of DBS 1C. A must see example! Please call 01993 849610, South East.

ASTON MARTIN DB9

2007, 61000 miles, £27,500. The car looks fabulous in Beautiful Pentland Green over Sandstorm leather, with wooden centre dash and door cappings. This is the upgraded 2007 variant with enhanced interior and better ride. The car is fitted with 19" 15 spoke Alloy wheels, satellite navigation, H I D headlights, Linn 950 W audio system, bright finish grille, heated seats, heated front screen, auto dim rear view mirror, front and rear parking sensors, front and rear cameras, cruise control, Apple Carplay upgrade to allow use of Google maps etc on the standard screen, silver brake callipers, anti-misting kit fitted to headlights, air conditioning. Please call 07973839935, South East.

123983

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2017, 59 miles, £129,999. Historic last-of-the-line model. Built to European / Swiss specifications. UK Unregistered. Offered from storage. Circa 96 kilometres from new. Undoubtedly, Aston Martin's most successful production car ever, the DB9 can lay claim to being responsible for bringing Aston Martin firmly into the modern era of manufacture and in promoting today's enviable brand recognition. Delivering turbine like engine performance, agile handling and timeless styling, the DB9, last of 9, we are proud to offer is a highly fitting acknowledgement to the long-lived success of the DB9 and would make a fitting addition to any discerning Aston Martin collection. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

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£65. No damage, post free. Please call 07968 659967, South East.

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ASTON MARTIN IN THE THAMES VALLEY

2003 Aston Martin Vanquish 2+2 in fabulous condition throughout and finished in Tungsten Silver with contrasting pale grey hide interior. This is a beautifully kept 2 owner example that has covered only 36,600 miles. Not expensive at **£49,950.**

2007 Aston Martin DB9 in Midnight blue with contrasting Sandstorm hide interior and the very desirable with rare MANUAL TRANSMISSION, making it a real driver's car. Superb condition with continuous service history. **£33,950.**

2000 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage Coupe with MANUAL TRANSMISSION , finished Porsche Cobalt blue with Pacific blue and Parchment hide interior, 38,000 miles only, near perfect condition, full service history and sensibly priced at **£23,950.**

2006 Aston martin DB9 Volante in Onyx black with contrasting Sandstorm hide interior. This is a beautiful, well-kept example with just over 55,000 recorded miles and a full-service history. Seriously good value at **£29,950.**

1996 Aston Martin Wide-Bodied Virage Volante, finished in Cheviot red with Magnolia hide interior piped in red. Fabulous condition, 14,000 miles only, full-service history, a very rare find and very collectable.
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